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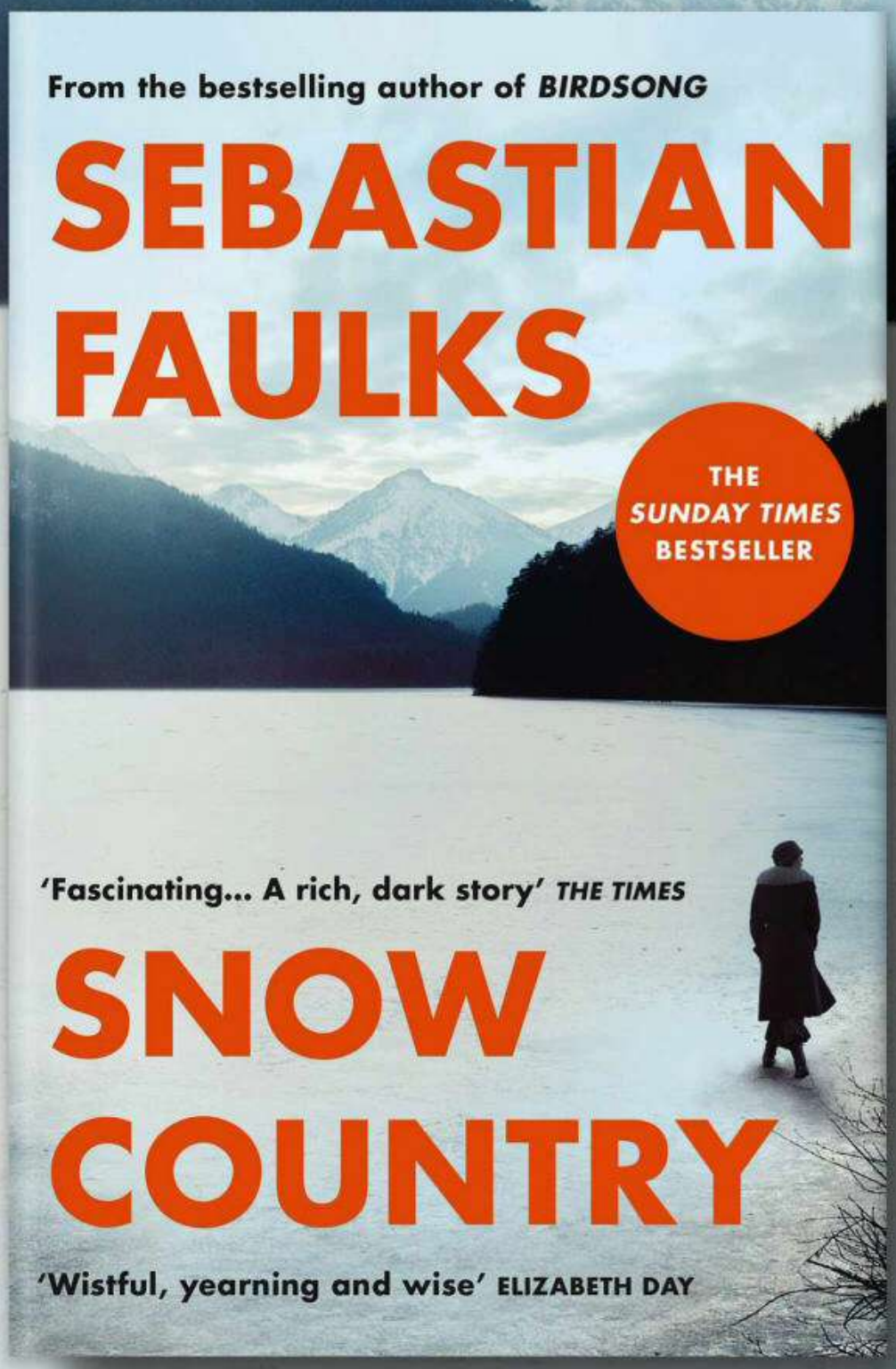
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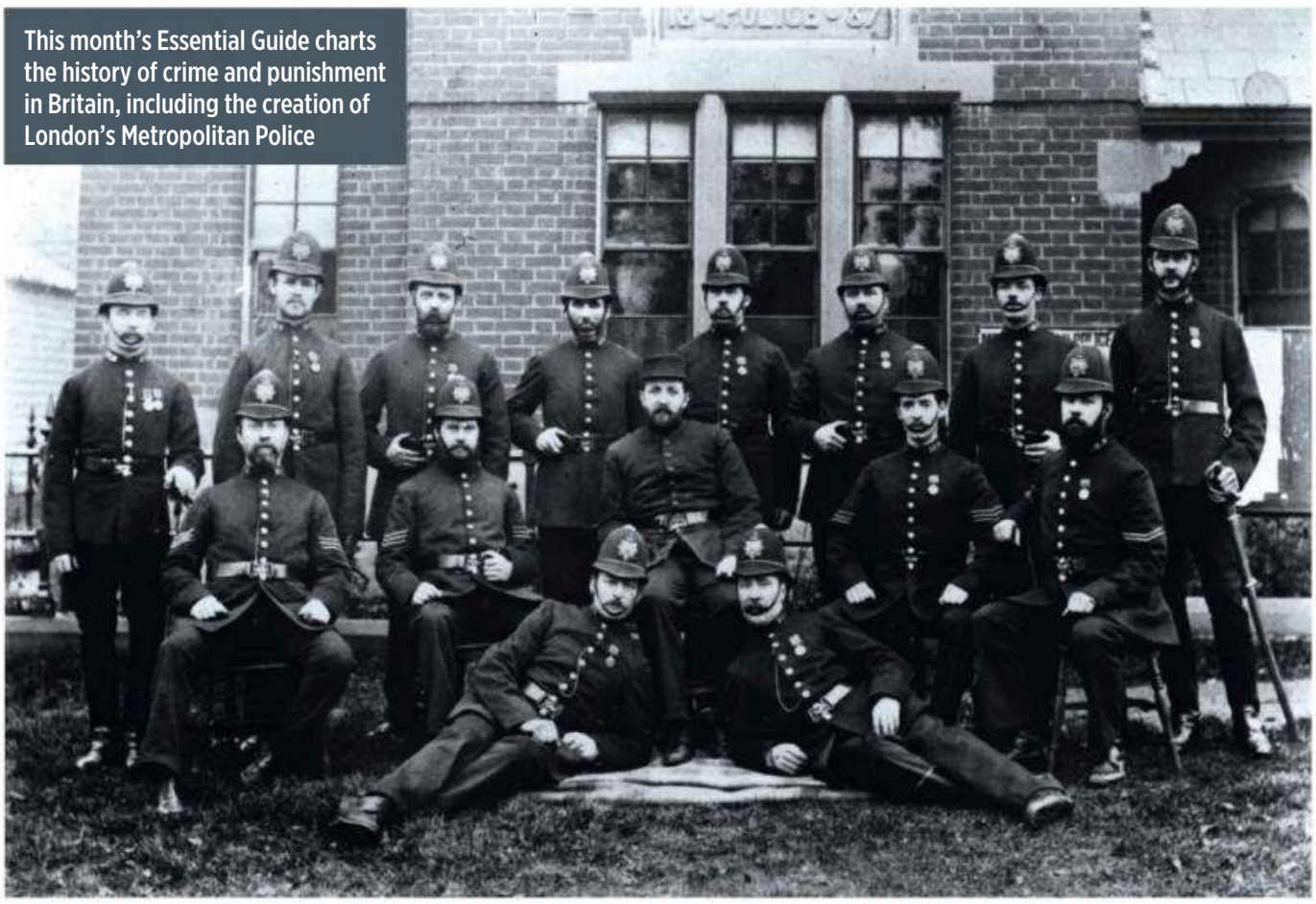

This month's Essential Guide charts the history of crime and punishment in Britain, including the creation of London's Metropolitan Police

From transporting criminals to the other side of the world in the 19th century, to the mass hangings of the medieval period, **attitudes to crime and punishment in Britain have fluctuated dramatically over the past seven centuries**. In this month's Essential Guide, we've enlisted the help of expert Dr Nell Darby to get to grips with how law and order was maintained in the past and explore historic opinions on criminality and justice. Turn to page 28 to get started.

One criminal from history who very nearly escaped detection was **Klaus Fuchs, the brilliant nuclear physicist who helped Britain and the US develop powerful new weapons during World War II** while simultaneously passing on atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. We delve into his fascinating life from page 64.

Elsewhere, we look at **the extraordinary story of polar explorer Douglas Mawson,** whose epic, 100-mile solo journey across the Antarctic in 1912–13 is a gripping tale that easily rivals the exploits of his better-known contemporaries Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen (*page 57*), and **question what the world might look like had the Black Death never happened** (*page 70*).

Also this month, we investigate why the **women and girls of the Bryant & May match-making factory downed tools and went on strike** in 1888 (*page 16*) and **analyse a work of art from 1920 that channels the pain and loss of World War I** (*page 62*). Plus, we take a closer look at the history of the Special Air Service (SAS). Turn to page 21 to find out more.

See you next month!

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

2
The maximum number of courses that could be eaten during a medieval meal, according to a law of 1336

£583m
The approximate present-day value of the 1990 City Bonds robbery

1,400
The number of women and girls who went on strike from the Bryant & May match-making factory in 1888

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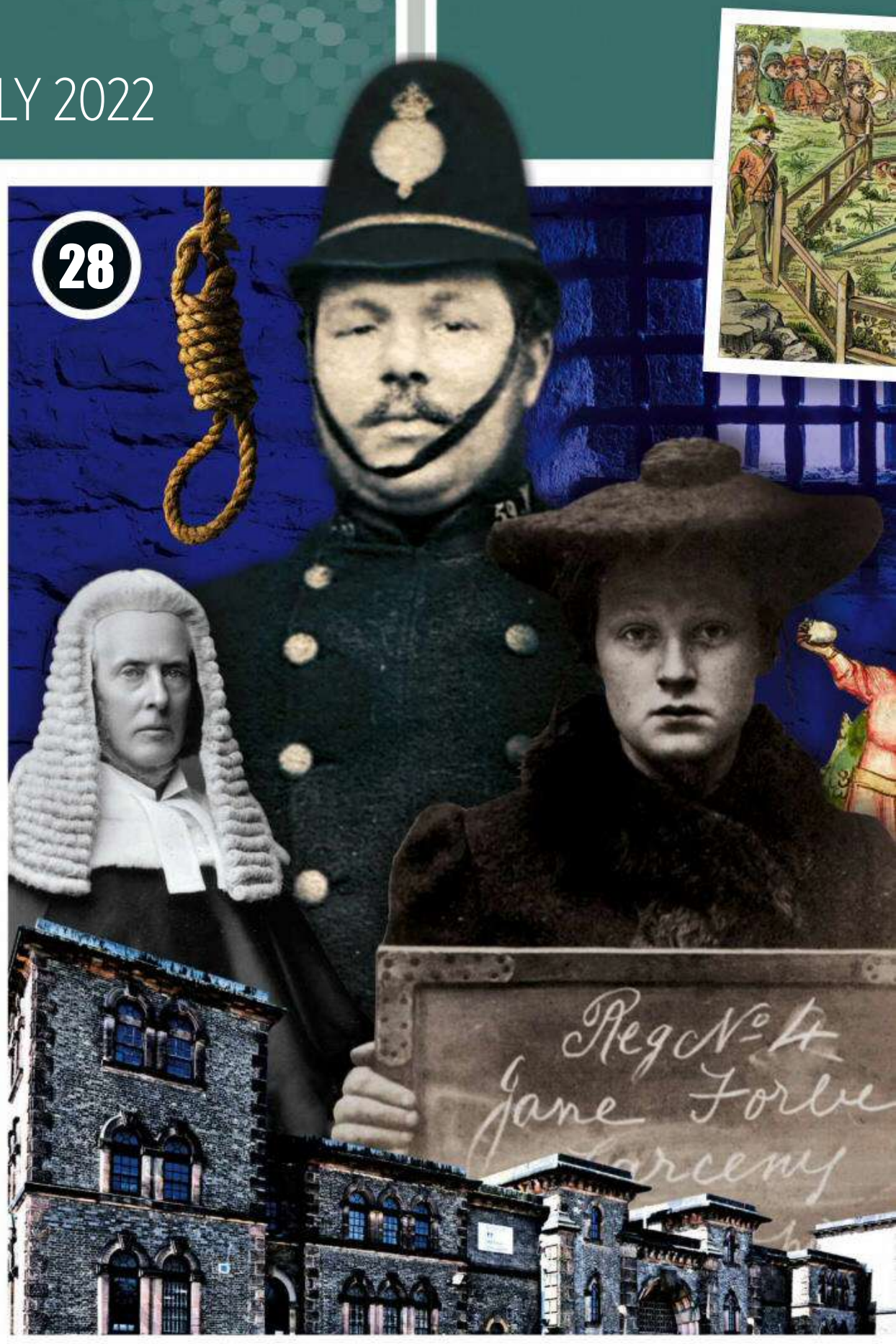

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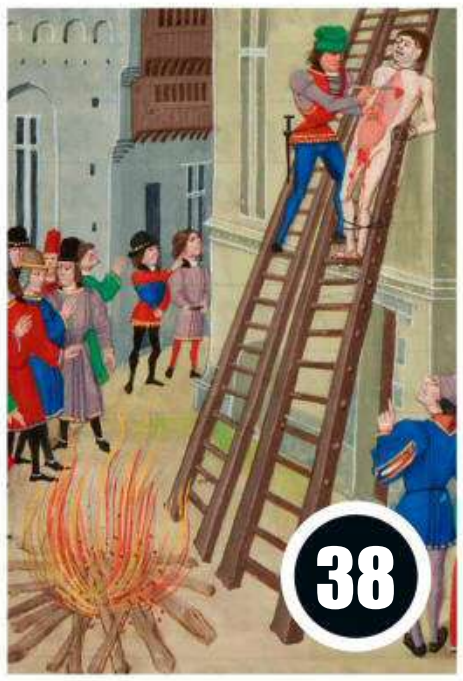
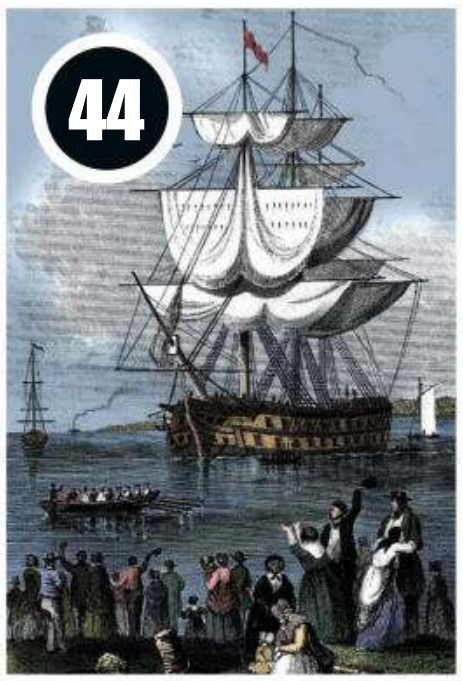
▲ Why humiliation was key to many past punishments

▲ How were women disciplined for their 'crimes'?



▲ Inside the grisly history of 'godly butchery'



▲ Discover the stories of transported convicts

▲ Klaus Fuchs: the talented nuclear physicist who spied for the Soviets

▲ How might the world have looked without the devastation of the plague?

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SNAPSHOTS

1932
CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

Still smiling and still holding a cigar, a recovering Winston Churchill is stretchered into his London home. The past couple of years had been trying for the statesman, not least politically as he festered in his 'wilderness years' with no ministerial position. Then, during a lecture tour of the United States, he was hit by a car while crossing New York's Fifth Avenue in December 1931. The 57-year-old suffered cracked ribs and a head wound for which he was prescribed "alcoholic spirits especially at meal times", despite Prohibition being the law in the US. The incident was not the end of his woes, however, as the convalescing Churchill was then struck by ill health: a bout of paratyphoid fever that caused an ulcer and internal bleeding, forcing him to spend a few weeks in a nursing home.

GETTY IMAGES

BBC

Glastonbury Festival 2022 will be broadcast across the BBC, including live TV coverage on BBC Two and concert specials on BBC Four. For more details, visit *bbc.co.uk/events/ej34mb*

SNAPSHOTS

1971
FREE LOVE AND MUSIC

It's one of the most famous music events in the world, but this photograph of the second-ever Glastonbury Festival (then known as Glastonbury Fair) shows a much more modest affair than the extravaganzas we have come to know today. Hosted by Somerset dairy farmer Michael Eavis, the 1971 festival attracted around 12,000 revellers, who enjoyed performances from the likes of David Bowie, Melanie, Joan Baez and Fairport Convention. And in the true spirit of its anti-commercial beginnings, the event was free to enter, with the first incarnation of the now-iconic Pyramid Stage (*seen here*) constructed out of scaffolding, expanded metal and plastic sheeting. This year, 210,000 people are expected to descend on Worthy Farm for the first edition of the festival since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic – a far cry from the small crowds it attracted in its infancy.

GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1939 DANCING IN THE SUN

In a revival of an invented Druid tradition, members of the English Folk Dance and Song Society ring in the summer solstice (or midsummer) with a sunrise dance at Stonehenge. Usually falling on 20 or 21 June, the summer solstice is when the Earth's axis is tilted most towards the Sun, giving the Northern Hemisphere its longest day of the year. Stonehenge is particularly important for those who mark the occasion, having been constructed between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago to align with the Sun's movements. Today, the summer solstice is one of the few times in the calendar that visitors are allowed to walk right up to and among the monument's towering stones.

GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

CAMBODIA CALLS FOR RETURN OF LOOTED STATUES

The Cambodian government is urging two UK museums to return artefacts it says were looted from their country several decades ago. In a letter addressed to her British counterpart Nadine Dorries, Cambodia's culture minister, Phoeurng Sackona, claims that the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum are in possession of statues stolen during the unrest caused by the Khmer Rouge – the murderous regime that ruled Cambodia between 1975–79.

The statues hold a particularly special place in Cambodian culture, as they are believed to contain the souls of people's dead ancestors. As reported by the BBC, both museums have since released statements saying that they intend to reply to Cambodia's claims, and that they are transparent about the provenance of their collections.

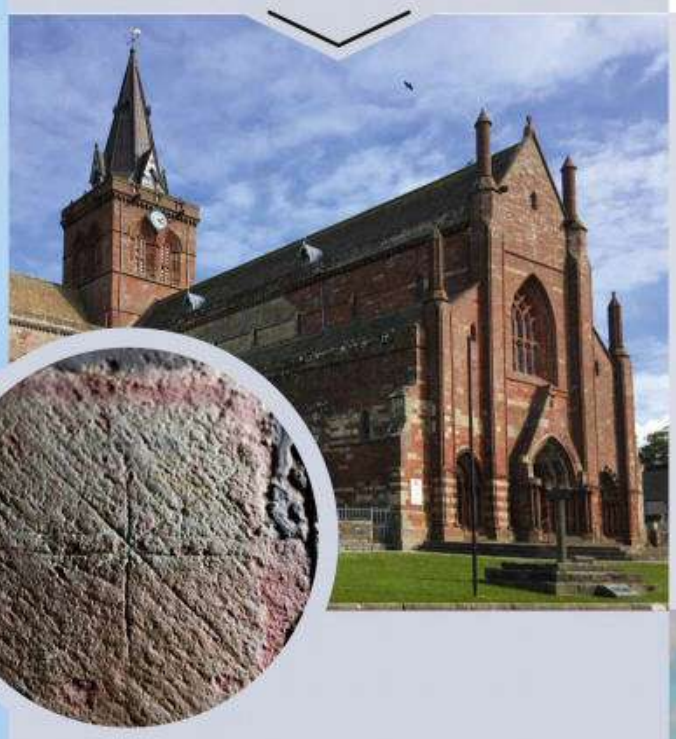
A photograph of the historic Prasat Thom pyramid temple at Koh Ker, northern Cambodia (*background*), alongside images of typical statues found at such sites (*right*). Many Cambodian temple artefacts were looted during the turmoil caused by the Khmer Rouge, with some ending up in western museums

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X4, BANK OF SCOTLAND X1, DR ANTONIA THOMAS X2

Scotland's new banknote features a portrait of Dr Flora Murray, along with a pair of images depicting female stretcher-bearers during World War I

SURVEY REVEALS CATHEDRAL GRAFFITI

Around 600 separate markings have been recorded as part of a historic graffiti survey at St Magnus Cathedral in Orkney. Alongside names and initials from the Georgian period, the survey team also identified a series of 'peck marks' on the building's pillars, possibly created by medieval pilgrims who believed the sandstone dust could cure their ailments. Other markings discovered at the cathedral – which was founded during the 12th century included a palm sized star symbol (*below*), which may have been a ritual protection mark designed to ward off evil.



SCOTTISH MEDICAL PIONEER FEATURES ON NEW BANKNOTE

A banknote featuring the face of suffragette and medical pioneer Dr Flora Murray has been launched in Scotland. The new Bank of Scotland £100 note, which entered circulation on 9 May, shows a portrait of Murray on the reverse, accompanied by a quote regarding her work during World War I. Born in Dumfriesshire in 1869, Murray qualified as a doctor in 1905 and went on to found two women's military hospitals in France, which were staffed entirely by suffragettes. Along with her partner, Dr Louisa Garrett Anderson, Murray then established the Endell Street Military Hospital in London the first institution in the UK where men were treated by female medical professionals.

HERB WAS 'VICTIM OF CLIMATE CHANGE'

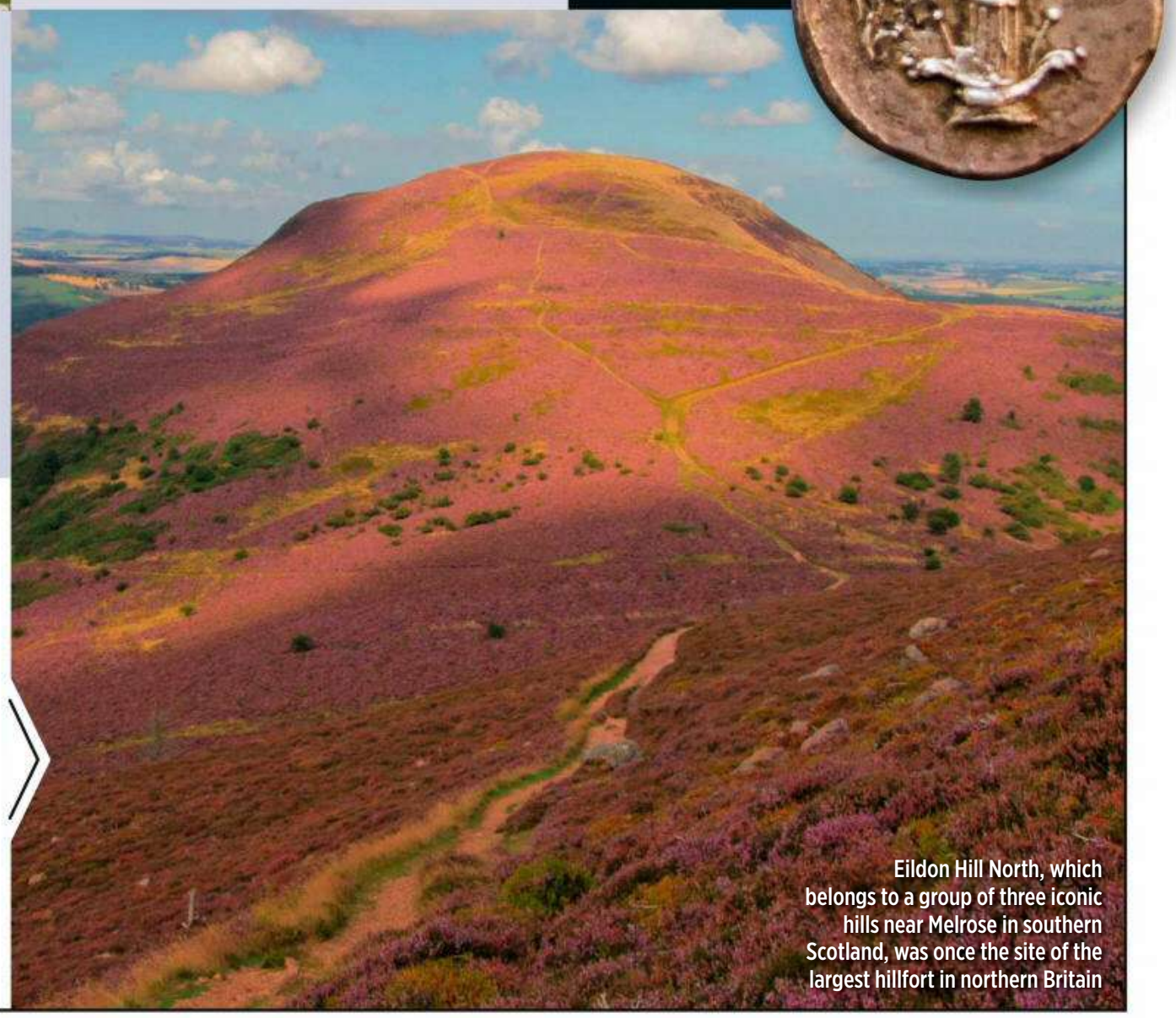
A North African herb grown by the ancient Romans as a perfume, aphrodisiac and condiment is thought to have been one of the earliest victims of man made climate change, say researchers. Although silphium was in widespread use during the rule of Julius Caesar (49 44 BC), experts from the University of New Hampshire claim that the herb's extinction a few decades later was triggered by deforestation, which altered the local microclimate it needed to survive. Silphium was so beloved of the Romans that it was even depicted on coinage, as demonstrated by the example shown right.

125

The number of burials discovered during recent excavations on land adjacent to Leicester Cathedral

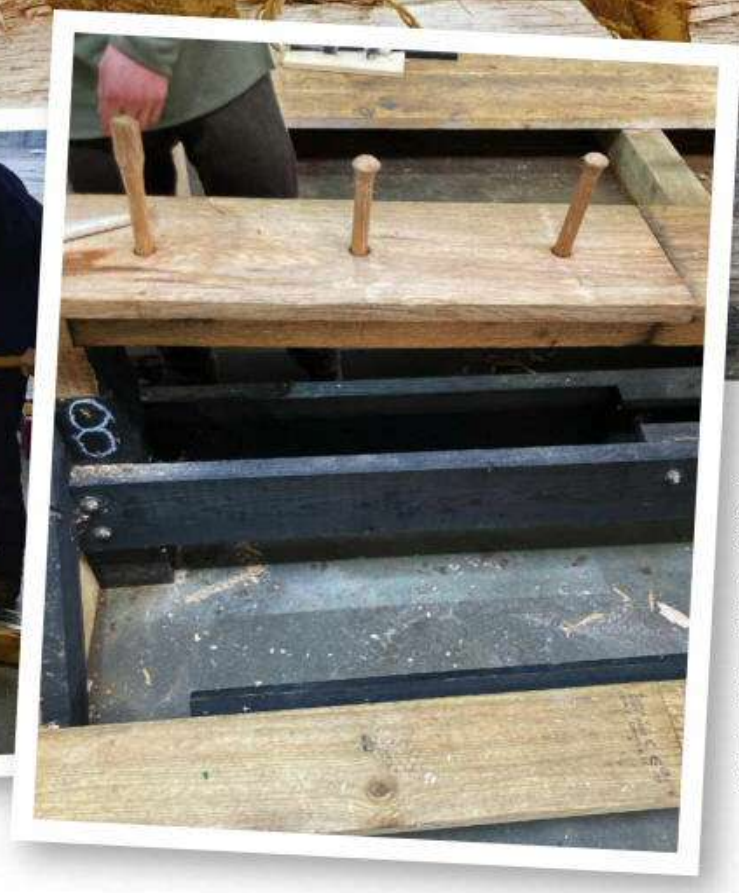
NEW DIG CHALLENGES HILLFORT'S HISTORY

Excavations at the site of Scotland's largest hillfort could rewrite history, claim experts. The fort at Eildon Hill North, near Melrose, was previously thought to have been deserted by native tribes around AD 73 when the Romans first arrived in the area. However, archaeologists now believe that natives were still calling it home for many years afterwards, and that the defences may have been created during the late Roman Iron Age rather than the late Bronze Age as traditionally assumed. The theory could be proved by carbon dating results, which are due back before the end of 2022.



Eildon Hill North, which belongs to a group of three iconic hills near Melrose in southern Scotland, was once the site of the largest hillfort in northern Britain

“We want to test the ship in different scenarios and finally come to a conclusion about what it was and wasn’t capable of”



ABOVE: **Production crew volunteer John Facer uses an axe to help create the stempost – part of the ship’s backbone**

LEFT: **Three wooden trenails, or pegs, that will be used to fix a ‘scarf joint’; the team members are replicating Anglo-Saxon methods wherever they can**

FAR LEFT: **An oak tree is brought to the Longshed and split to make planks**

SUTTON HOO SHIP’S COMPANY

Project manager at the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company

Jacq Barnard

RIGHT: **Shipwrights carefully hoist the vessel's completed stempost into position**

BELOW: **As an experienced manager with a passion for rowing, Jacq Barnard certainly had the right CV to lead the project**

WHAT IS THE SUTTON HOO SHIP'S COMPANY AND WHAT ARE ITS AIMS?

The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company was formed in 2016 to recreate the Anglo Saxon ship used for the burial in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo. It was thought to be the grave of King Rædwald of East Anglia, buried in AD 625 along with some amazing treasures that can now be seen at the British Museum. We are reconstructing the ship in a purpose built Longshed in Woodbridge, Suffolk, just across the water from the historic archaeological site. Whereas many of the Sutton Hoo artefacts have been reconstructed, the ship never has: that is what we are doing. Then we want to test the ship on the water.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

As the project manager, I oversee all aspects of the reconstruction. This includes managing teams of shipbuilders, recorders, researchers, and front of house and back office crews. I became involved in 2018 when I was introduced to a trustee of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company by a colleague from my local rowing club. The company needed a local manager with organisational, financial and rowing skills for once in my life I had the correct combination of skills on my CV!

In the early days, we worked around kitchen tables to set up the company and identify funding opportunities. The Longshed, where the building is taking place, would be completed later that year. It is where I am now working most days, but, equally, I am engaging with our volunteers online. Our behind the scenes volunteers are working all over the world.

HOW AUTHENTIC ARE THE METHODS USED TO RECREATE THE SHIP?

We are examining the archaeology to understand and replicate the Anglo Saxon shipbuilding methods, and volunteers are trained to handle and use axes to work the timber into each of the components in the same way that our ancestors did. But we cannot claim to be completely authentic: we work in a modern shed; the timber is delivered by lorry; and we have to lift things with health and safety compliant equipment. That is not to mention the use of pencils and dust extractors.

Also, in some of the photographs, you will see the sleek wooden backbone resting on a black strongback. This is the cradle designed to support the weight and shape of the ship. The black 'moulds' are temporary structures made from modern softwood and will not be part of the final ship.

What we can claim, however, is that every part of the finished ship that goes on the water will be created by hand and finished by axe. Our primary aim is to reconstruct the Sutton Hoo ship so that we can test it in different scenarios and finally come to a conclusion about what it was and wasn't capable of.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THE PROJECT?

As with any project of this size, funding is the biggest challenge. It is possible for supporters to 'fund a fixing': sponsor each individual metal rivet, spike and bolt needed and a lot are needed as there 4,308 different fixings. However, the cost of iron has tripled during the Covid 19 pandemic, so sponsorship now only covers the actual cost of the iron. Another challenge is the number of man hours required. Axe work is slow and exacting, so we are reliant on attracting enough volunteers to complete the ship within the allocated time frame.

WHEN SHOULD THE SHIP BE READY?

So far, the complicated backbone the three dimensional structure that runs the full length of the hull has been completed. All being well we are hoping to launch the ship in spring 2024.

JACQ BARNARD has been the project manager of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company since 2018 and also works for British Rowing as a coach educator. For more information about the project, visit *saxonship.org*

East End matchgirls walk out on strike

Words: Emma Slattery Williams

Dozens of workers crammed on a grim factory floor, toxic fumes filling the air, long hours and low wages that barely covered the cost of living, dangerous machinery, and the constant threat of punishment from the foremen, both financial and physical. These were the conditions endured by the predominantly female workforce at the Bryant & May match making factory in Bow, in the East End of London. For years, these matchgirls and many were girls – were powerless to stand up to their employers: they were poor, uneducated, unskilled and female.

That was until one day, 5 July 1888. Angered by the unfair dismissal of one of their own and inspired by a newspaper article into their factory conditions, the matchgirls downed their tools and walked out in the middle of a shift. Soon, 1,400 women and girls were refusing to work in a full-scale strike. In three weeks, they garnered widespread support for their cause, had the matter discussed in Parliament, and made their employers agree to all of their demands. In doing so, they changed the course of industrial action in Britain and drew attention to the plight of the poor, lighting the match to social change.

The matchgirls at the Bryant & May factory worked up to 14 hours a day, with just two meagre breaks

PAY AND PAIN

The matchgirls had struggled ever since the factory had been established in the 1860s by its Quaker owners, William Bryant and Francis May. The East End was a place of extreme deprivation, poverty, overpopulation and disease, and those who lived there had to find work where they could. Those running the factories knew this, and exploited it.

Shifts at Bryant & May could regularly last up to 14 hours, with the working day starting at 6.30am in the summer months. For a gruelling six day week, with only two breaks per shift, many earned no more than four shillings. After rent, this was barely enough to buy food. Male manual workers in other industries could take home 40 shillings, while the shareholders enjoyed high dividends as the matchmaking business was booming.

But even these meagre wages could be reduced, too, since the foremen had the power to issue fines for a whole host of unreasonable offences, such as having a messy workstation, talking, and having dirty feet (which was particularly unfair, as many workers could not afford shoes).

Similarly, being late or dropping a tray of matches could also make a huge dent in a weekly income. And yet, the costs kept spiralling as matchgirls were required to pay for their own equipment, from glue to brushes.

The Bryant & May factory operated like a sweatshop, with overcrowded and unsafe conditions. Matchgirls were abused by foremen if deemed not to be working hard enough, and could lose a finger on the industrial machinery. The greatest danger, though, was the toxic chemicals they were forced to handle, especially white phosphorous. This was the active ingredient in match tips, but breathing in its vapour was extremely poisonous. To make matters worse, with no separate break room, the matchgirls were forced to eat their meals right next to the chemicals.

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

DID YOU KNOW?

NAME OUT OF A HAT

Despite their desperately low wages, the matchgirls managed to have a distinctive fashion that included big hats, often with feathers. They would pool their money into 'feather clubs' to buy the hats, which they took turns at wearing.

MAIN: **Striking matchgirls, displaying the telltale signs of 'phossy jaw'**

ABOVE: **Annie Besant wrote a damning exposé of conditions at Bryant & May – a catalyst for the industrial action**

TOP LEFT: **Members of the Matchgirls Strike Committee, with Besant (*top row, in white dress*) and fellow activist Herbert Burrows standing at the centre**

Working with white phosphorous could lead to a gruesome disease known as 'phossy jaw': a type of bone cancer that caused agonising toothache, swollen gums and facial disfigurement. Abscesses and tooth loss were common, before the bone of the lower jaw would rot away. Finally, phossy jaw could result in death. The only precaution taken by the factory owners was to demand that teeth be removed at the first sign of an ache or disfigurement. Refusal was a sackable offence.

"WHITE WAGE SLAVES"

Discontent among the matchgirls had been brewing for some time, and had led to several attempts at strikes before – all of which went nowhere. Then, in late June 1888, one of their number was dismissed. It came after an article was published in the weekly paper, *The Link*, by social activist Annie Besant. It was a damning piece exposing the conditions at Bryant & May. Besant, along with fellow activist Herbert Burrows, had met with many matchgirls and heard of their appalling experiences. In her exposé, titled 'White Slavery in London', she referred to them as "white wage slaves" working in a "prison-house".

The factory managers were furious, and tried to force their employees to sign a statement refuting Besant's claims. A group of the matchgirls refused. Tensions continued to rise until the decision was taken to sack one of the women believed to have been interviewed for the article. It was at that moment that the rest of the matchgirls put down their tools and walked out.

By 6 July, the entire factory workforce was on strike: around 1,400 women and girls. A picket line was formed at the gates, marches made their way through the streets, and a small group was selected to put forward the workers' demands. These included the reinstatement of their dismissed colleague, the abolishment of fines, and a dining room so they could eat away from contamination.

> "The decision was taken to sack one of the women. It was at this moment that the rest of the matchgirls walked out"

News of the strike spread, although not everyone was on their side. Even years later, George Duckworth, a public servant who was part of a social reform investigation into what life was really like for Londoners, described the workers at Bryant & May as "a rough set of girls… Rough and rowdy, but not bad morally". But there was plenty of support for the matchgirls, too, with Besant herself helping to arrange an appeal for donations from the public. Meetings were held and some matchgirls even went to Parliament to meet MPs.

At first, Bryant & May tried to dismiss the strike as harmless, but as public sympathy for the matchgirls and negative press for the factory kept growing, they were soon forced to concede. In mid-July, a deputation of the strikers met with the Bryant & May directors, who gave in to all their demands. The need for workers to buy their own materials was removed, the fining practices were ended, and a ▶

THIS MONTH... 1888

ANNIVERSARIES THAT HAVE MADE HISTORY

dining room was provided. It was a stunning victory.

More importantly, a union for the workers was established. One of the first female trade unions in Britain, the Matchmakers Union had more than 600 members by October 1888. The same year, it sent its first delegate to the Trades Union Congress.

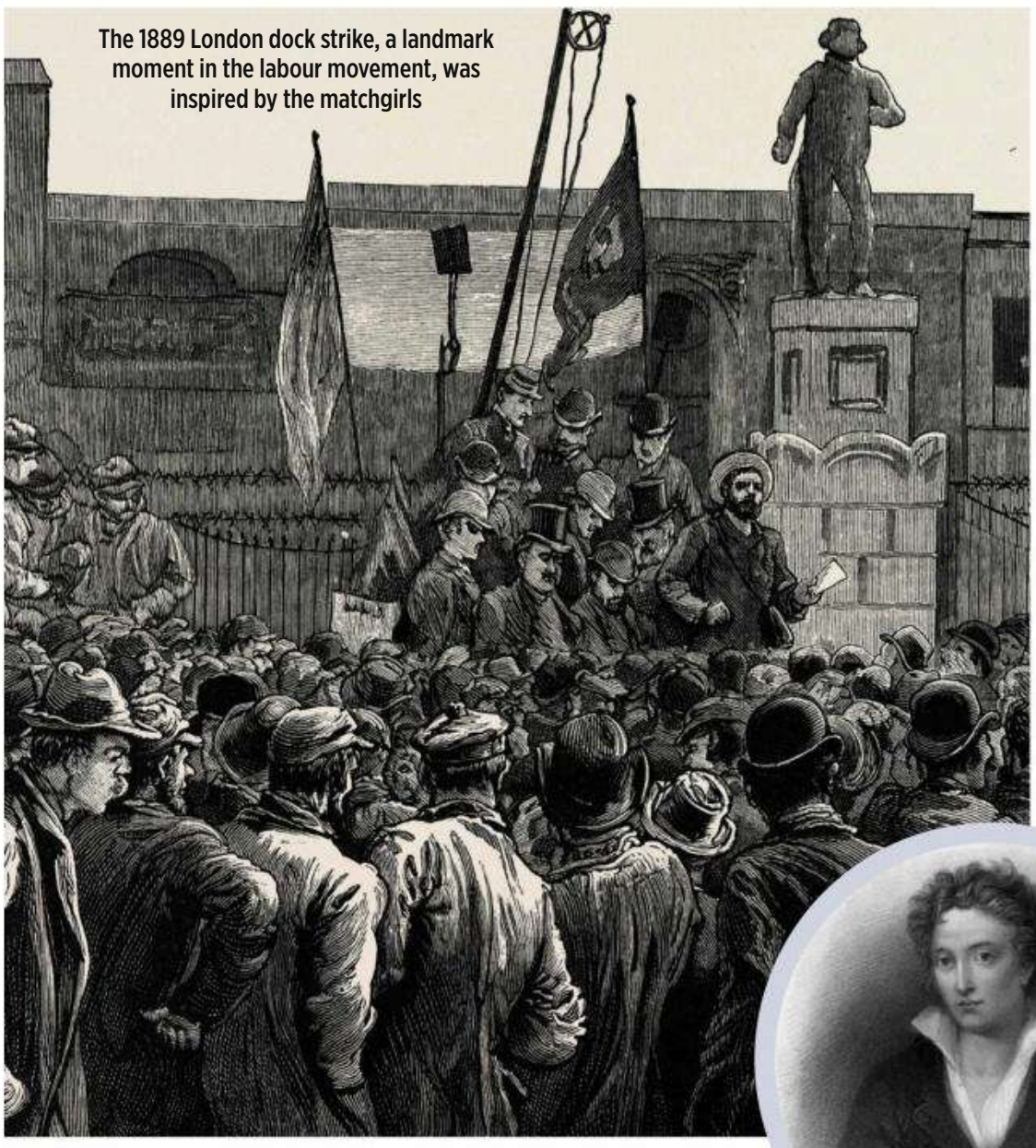
EMPLOYER SCRUTINY

As a result of the strike, the reputation of Quaker employers was tarnished. The image of a caring attitude to workers seen at companies like Cadbury's and Rowntree's did not fit the experiences at Bryant & May. They were accused of hypocrisy by *The Echo*: "Messrs Bryant & May are well known Liberals and have... paraded their Liberalism before the world," the piece read. "How could they meet their constituents with large dividends in their pockets... when their employees in the east of London existed on next to starvation wages?"

With employer practices brought under greater scrutiny, the danger of using white phosphorus came to public attention. William Booth, founder of the Christian charitable organisation the Salvation Army, opened a match factory in 1891 using the safer red phosphorus. It would be another 10 years until Bryant & May followed suit, before a total ban on white phosphorus was introduced in 1910.

The matchgirls' strike of 1888 not only improved conditions in their own industry eventually but opened the public's eyes to the exploitation of the poorest workers in all industries around the country. In the aftermath, there was a wave of strikes, including one led by London dock workers, who, in 1889, contacted the Matchmakers Union for advice. One of the organisers, John Burns, cried out in a meeting: "Stand shoulder to shoulder. Remember the matchgirls, who won their fight and formed a union." This surge helped lay the groundwork for what would become the Labour Party.

Through their bravery and solidarity, the East End matchgirls improved their own lot and brought positive change for workers, the legacy of which is still felt more than 100 years later.



The 1889 London dock strike, a landmark moment in the labour movement, was inspired by the matchgirls

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

BBC

EACH MONTH THROUGHOUT 2022, WE'LL BE COMMEMORATING THE BBC'S 100TH BIRTHDAY WITH A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE...

30 July 1966

ENGLAND'S WORLD CUP VICTORY DRAWS THE BIGGEST TV AUDIENCE

"Some people are on the pitch! They think it's all over! It is now!" These iconic words, uttered by commentator Kenneth Wolstenholme, conclude the football World Cup in 1966, with England beating West Germany 4-2. It is, and still remains, the biggest sporting event in British television history, with a record 32.3 million people tuning into the BBC broadcast live from Wembley Stadium.

OTHER ANNIVERSARIES

A LOOK BACK AT OTHER EVENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN JULY THROUGHOUT HISTORY

17 July 1453

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR FINALLY ENDS

After 116 (not 100) years of conflict between neighbours England and France, the Hundred Years' War is brought to an end at the battle of Castillon. What had originally begun with a dispute over the French Crown is concluded with a decisive French victory, and with England losing almost all of its territory on the continent, save for Calais.

8 July 1822

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY DROWNS

Less than a month before his 30th birthday, the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley drowns when his boat gets into trouble in a storm off the coast of Italy. His body washes up on shore and is cremated, although his heart does not burn. Instead, it is given to his widow Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*.

BBC Radio's **Danny Robins** speaks to a woman who saw her bedridden best friend appear to her in a park – at the exact moment that she passed away

"Do you believe in ghosts?" I ask. "No," comes Laura's firm and immediate reply. "But have you seen one?" I press.

"Yes," she says. "And the ghost I think I saw was my friend. My best friend."

People often ask me which of my cases has sent the biggest shiver down my spine. I've heard tales of ruined cottages in the Scottish Highlands haunted by violent spirits, and Victorian houses where strange apparitions re enact bloody murders, but the story that sticks in my head most, the one that can stop me getting to sleep, is Laura's. It is deceptively simple in comparison and yet, for me, it is utterly chilling.

Laura is in her forties now, but the event in question happened in her late teens. She'd left home young and moved into a shared house full of strangers. One became a friend: Anna, a few years older and full of life and energy, with a Rubenesque figure and striking red frizzy hair that seemed to defy gravity. They became best friends. Sadly, however, Anna developed cancer and Laura faced the heart breaking prospect that her friend was going to die.

She remembers the last time that she saw Anna (by then, they were living in separate houses). Anna was in bed, unable to get up and heavily sedated on morphine. Her last words to her best friend were: "Keep partying, Laura Bear", her nickname for Laura.

GHOSTS FROM GRIEF

Having said goodbye, an emotional Laura walked home through the park. She reached a hill. "And I looked up and Anna was stood on that hill on a pathway near the trees."

"Anna, who you know is ill at home, unable to go out?" I cannot help but interject.

"Yes. You know how you know your loved ones, how they stand, how they walk? Anna didn't look like anybody else. It was Anna."

I can hear the total conviction in Laura's voice. When she got home that day, stunned by her strange sighting, her phone rang. It was Anna's dad calling to let Laura know that Anna had just passed away.

Had Laura witnessed what is often called a 'crisis apparition', the ghost of someone that appears to a loved one at the moment of their death? Paranormal history is littered with such stories, often involving soldiers appearing to their wives or parents at the moment they are killed on a battlefield hundreds of miles away. Or did Laura have a hallucination brought on by her intense grief?

As intriguing as this experience is, it's only the prelude to the real mystery of this case. Seven years later, Laura has moved on with her life: she has a son, who she's left with a babysitter so she can enjoy a night out with work colleagues. They go to watch a psychic medium in a local village hall. Laura's no believer, and even if she was, she thinks this medium is very unimpressive, blustering and guessing throughout the show.

When it's over, Laura's friends insist on chatting to the medium. By now, Laura wishes she could escape to the pub, but the medium spots her and says she is glad to have caught Laura before she left. "There was a woman with red hair here for you," the medium says. "But she told me not to reach out to you during the show because you would have rejected it."

And then the medium looks straight into Laura's eyes and tells her the message that this female spirit asked to pass on: "Keep partying, Laura Bear."

Maybe you can see why this one has never left me and why it can send a shiver down my spine, even now...

DANNY ROBINS is a writer, broadcaster and journalist. He is the presenter of the BBC Radio 4 podcasts *The Battersea Poltergeist* and *Uncanny*, available now on BBC Sounds

LISTEN

You can hear Laura's full story in *Uncanny* case 4, 'My Best Friend's Ghost', available to stream on BBC Sounds: *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0011jxv*

WILLIE RUNTE X1, GETTY IMAGES X2

‘Master of the wartime spy thriller’
FINANCIAL TIMES

WHAT IF HITLER HAD SURVIVED?

The gripping new spy thriller from the *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *Hitler’s Secret*

Adolf Hitler is said to have killed himself in his Berlin bunker. But his body is never found, and many people believe he is still alive. The newspapers are full of stories reporting sightings and theories and the Allies are getting nervous.

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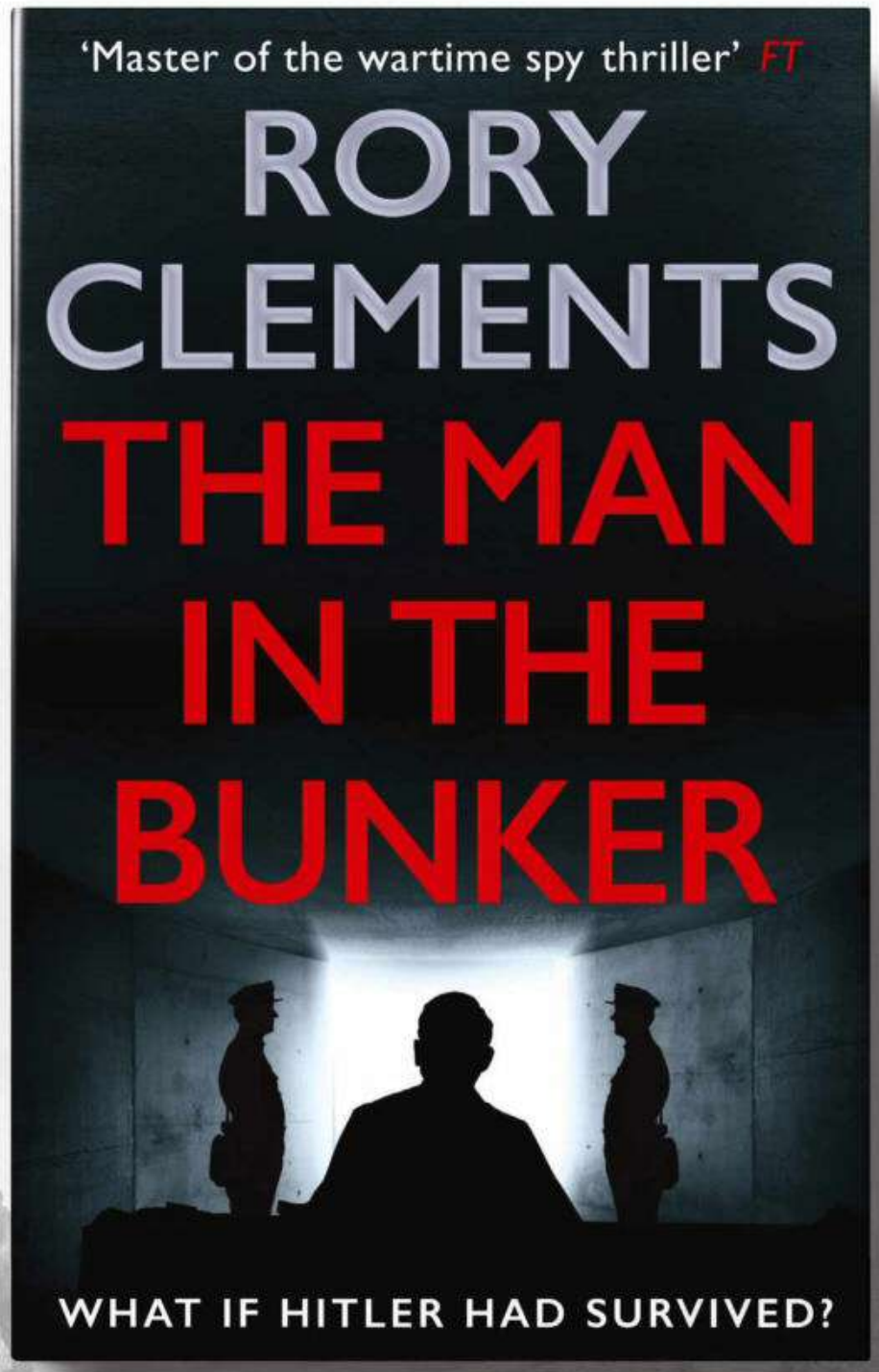

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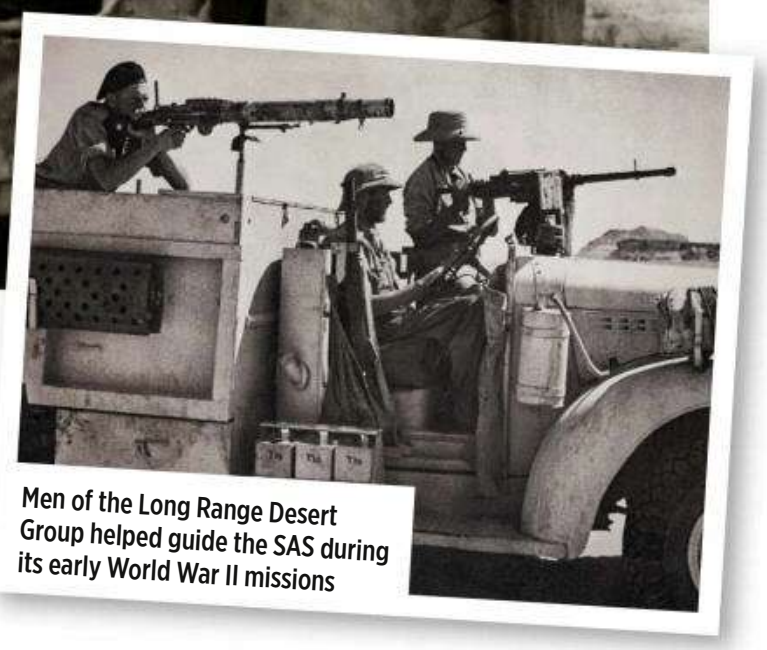
SCAN THE CODE

The history of the SAS

Gavin Mortimer

An SAS jeep patrol during the North African campaign in World War II. Pictured is David Stirling (*far right*), a lieutenant when he co-founded the unit



Men of the Long Range Desert Group helped guide the SAS during its early World War II missions

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

WHAT IS THE SAS?

The SAS (Special Air Service) is Britain's elite special forces unit, formed in the summer of 1941 by two Scottish brothers, David and Bill Stirling, who were stationed in Cairo. The war in North Africa was not going well for the British, and the Stirlings came up with the idea for a small parachute unit of volunteers to undertake guerrilla raids deep inside enemy territory.

The first operation was launched on 16 November 1941, but it coincided with a fierce storm, and of the 55 men who parachuted into Libya to attack German and Italian airfields, 34 were killed or captured. Undeterred, David Stirling changed tactics for their next raid in December and hitched a lift to the target in lorries driven by the Long Range Desert Group, another special forces unit which was adept at reconnaissance. This time, the SAS destroyed 24 aircraft and a petrol dump on Tamet Airfield without suffering any loses.

> "The SAS was 'special' because it was much smaller in size and focused on guerrilla warfare"

WHAT MADE IT 'SPECIAL'?

Although the British Army had in 1940 formed a parachute battalion in the UK (which would become the Parachute Regiment), the SAS was 'special' because it was much smaller in size and focused on guerrilla warfare, such as attacking enemy airfields and disrupting their lines of communication. Military parachuting was still in its infancy, but the Germans had demonstrated its potential during the invasion of the Low Countries. The SAS learned to parachute at its base 90 miles east of Cairo.

But, as the failure of the inaugural raid showed, the desert was not suitable for parachuting at this time. However, a second SAS regiment formed in 1943 and undertook several successful parachute operations in enemy territory in Italy. Both 1SAS and 2SAS parachuted into ▶

France after D Day to support the Maquis (rural French Resistance fighters) in their guerrilla warfare.

WHERE DID IT GO AFTER NORTH AFRICA?

After the Allies' defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa in May 1943, the SAS was involved in the invasions of Sicily and mainland Italy that summer. One of its most important tasks was the destruction of some powerful Italian guns on the southeast coast of Sicily, hours before the arrival of the main invasion fleet.

After taking part in operations in Italy, the SAS returned to the UK in early 1944 and began training for the invasion of France. Both 1 and 2SAS took part in missions deep inside Occupied France, where they waged an effective guerrilla war against the Nazis. Their heroic exploits earned the praise of Supreme Allied Commander (and future US president) Dwight Eisenhower, who praised the "ruthlessness" of the SAS in harassing the Germans.

The SAS subsequently played an important role in Germany, acting as a motorised reconnaissance force for the Allied armour in the final weeks of the war in Europe.

WHAT HAPPENED TO IT IN 1945?

The SAS was disbanded at the end of World War II because it was believed the new era of peace would have no place for such a unit. That view was soon proved naive. Not only did the Cold War begin, but many British colonies began agitating for independence.

One of the colonies, Malaya, erupted into conflict in 1948 when the local communist party attempted to overthrow the British. The previous year, 1947, a territorial unit of the SAS 21 had been formed, and some of its soldiers were deployed in what became known as the Malayan Emergency.

As the fighting intensified, it was decided in 1952 to raise a regular regiment 22SAS and in the next 20 years it fought in Malaya, Borneo, Yemen and for over a decade in Oman, where the SAS lost a dozen soldiers in fighting to protect the sultan from communist insurgents.

CAN ANYONE JOIN THE SAS?

Only serving members of the Armed Forces can join the regular 22SAS Regiment, and few who attempt the notorious 'Selection' course make the grade. Applicants are tested psychologically as well as physically, and the course criteria that exist today were first laid down in the 1950s. Drawing on the wartime experience, the SAS listed the seven characteristics of the ideal recruit: initiative, self discipline, independence of mind, an ability to work without supervision, stamina, patience and a sense of humour.

Today, 'Selection' comprises three stages, beginning with a three week endurance test in the Brecon Beacons, Wales, in which candidates must prove themselves fit and good at navigation. Those that pass then head to the Belize jungle to see how they react in an alien environment, and if they survive that experience, they undergo 'Escape & Evasion & Tactical Questioning', a simulation of what would happen if they were caught. Only then has one earned the coveted SAS beret.

WHAT IS THE SAS MOST FAMOUS FOR?

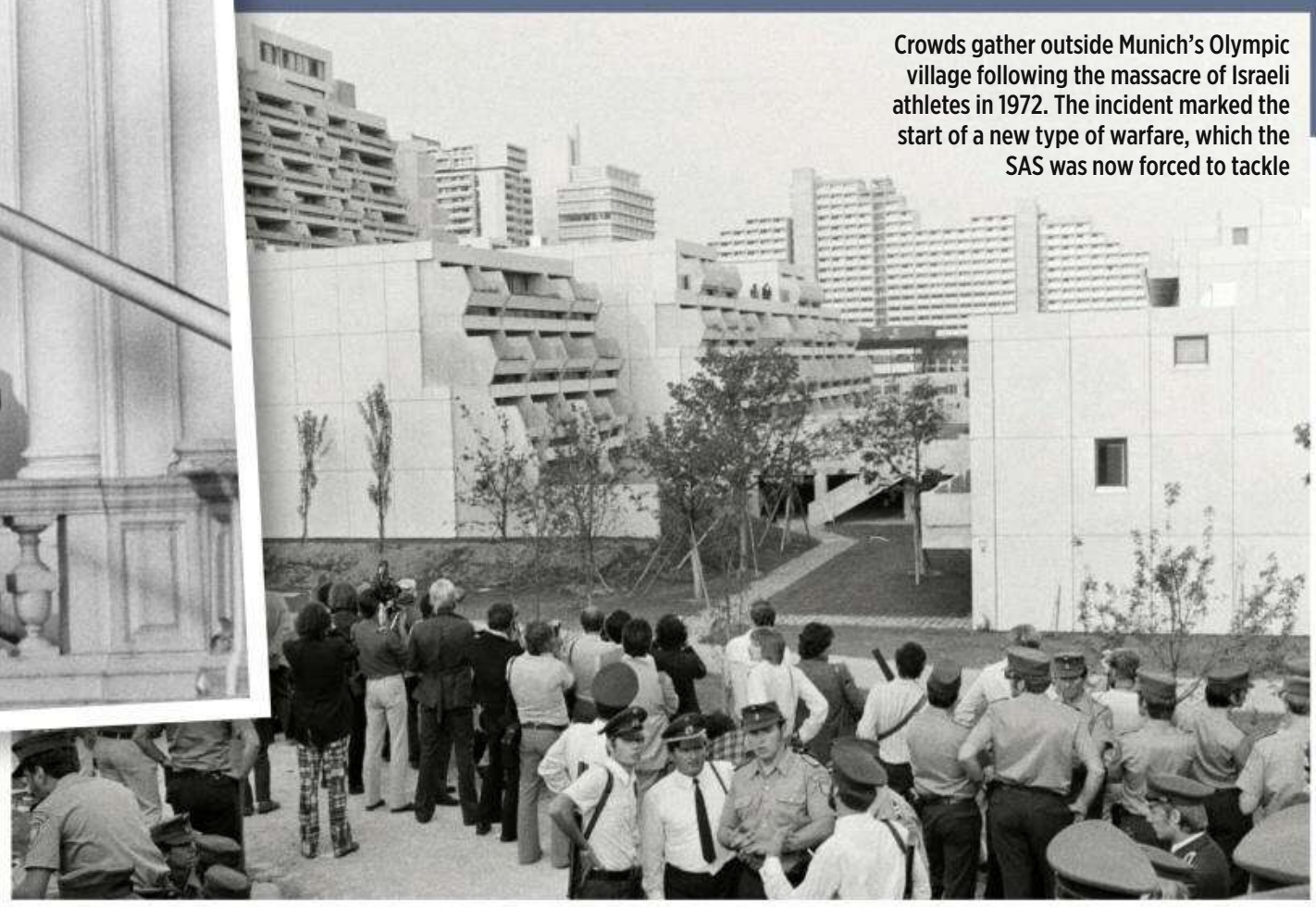
For many years after the war, few people knew of the SAS, but that changed on 30 April 1980 when six terrorists entered the Iranian Embassy in London and took 26 people hostage. The terrorists demanded the recognition of the Iranian province of

SAS troops scour the jungle for insurgents during the Malayan Emergency in 1953

An SAS applicant tackles a fence during the unit's three-week endurance test in the Brecon Beacons

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X5

SAS members prepare to launch an assault during the Iranian Embassy siege on 5 May 1980. Their efforts resulted in the rescue of the hostages



Crowds gather outside Munich's Olympic village following the massacre of Israeli athletes in 1972. The incident marked the start of a new type of warfare, which the SAS was now forced to tackle

Khuzestan, and the negotiations continued for six days until they murdered a hostage.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher ordered the SAS to end the siege and the television footage of it storming the embassy and successfully freeing the hostages was beamed around the world.

A decade later the SAS was in action in Iraq, operating behind enemy lines, and one of its patrols ran into trouble. The patrol's exploits spawned a bestselling memoir by one of its men, Steven Billy Mitchell (writing under the pseudonym Andy McNab), entitled *Bravo Two Zero*, which was made into a television movie.

ARE THERE SAS LEGENDS?

Plenty. Every SAS soldier is exceptional for having passed the gruelling selection process, but even among the elite there are some who stand out.

Blair Mayne assumed command of the SAS after the capture of David Stirling by the Germans in 1943. A giant of a man, the former Irish rugby star combined courage with initiative and agility, and he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) on four occasions.

Another superb wartime SAS man was Roy Farran of 2SAS, who received a DSO and three Military Crosses. Johnny Cooper joined the SAS in 1941 and served with the regiment for 18 years, fighting in Malaya and Oman after the war.

Talaiasi Labalaba also fought in Oman, in 1972, when he was killed in the successful defence of the fort at Mirbat.

> "Instead of fighting insurgents in far-off countries, the SAS began to engage a new enemy much closer to home"

A statue of the Fijian was unveiled at the SAS HQ in Herefordshire in 2009.

WHY IS IT SO SECRET?

The role of the SAS radically changed in the 1970s: instead of fighting insurgents in far off countries, it now engaged a new enemy much closer to home. Terrorism as we know it today took root in Europe during the 1970s, most graphically when a group of Palestinian terrorists murdered 11 members of the Israeli Olympic squad in Munich in 1972. It arrived in Britain in 1974 when an Irish Republican Army (IRA) terror cell launched a bombing campaign. The cell was finally cornered in a London flat in December 1975 and surrendered after a six day siege when it heard that the SAS had been summoned.

The following year, the SAS was deployed to Northern Ireland as the 'Troubles' intensified. It was a new type of war, one that required covert surveillance and stealth. Publicity, as much as the terrorists, became the enemy of the SAS, and the government adopted a policy that continues to this day of refusing to comment on special forces' operations.

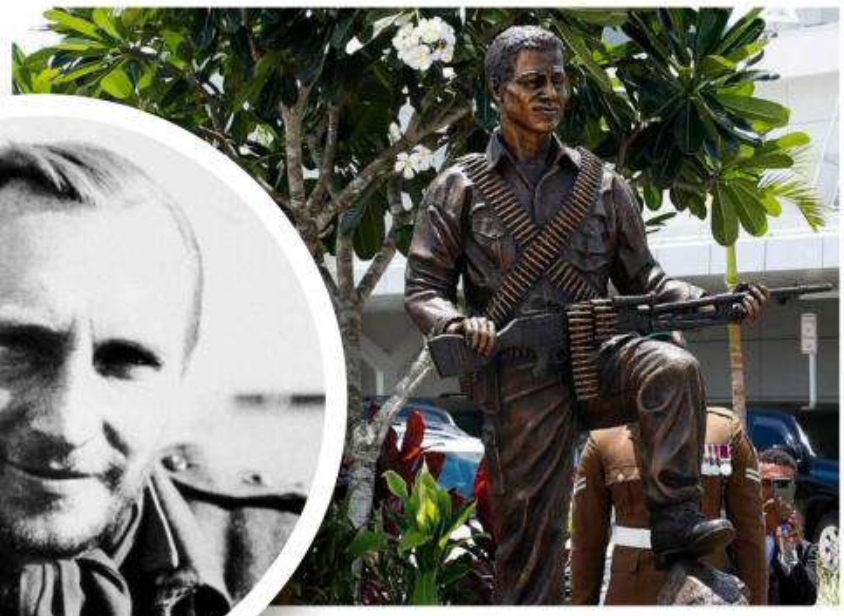
WHAT IS ITS ROLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

The SAS continues to operate in many trouble spots around the world, but the exact nature of its activities is shrouded in secrecy. It was deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan at the beginning of the century, and is also believed to have been sent to Syria and Iraq in 2014 15 to help fight the Islamic State.

In April this year, some media outlets claimed that the SAS had been training Ukrainian special forces in sabotage in their war against Russia, but as ever, there was no official confirmation.

BELOW LEFT: **Blair Mayne took command of the SAS in 1943, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order on four occasions**

BELOW RIGHT: **A statue in Fiji of SAS sergeant Talaiasi Labalaba, who was killed in Oman in 1972. A similar statue stands at the SAS HQ in Herefordshire**



GAVIN MORTIMER is the author of *David Stirling: The Phoney Major: The Life, Times and Truth about the Founder of the SAS* (Constable, 2022), which he discusses on a recent episode of the *HistoryExtra* podcast. Listen at *historyextra.com/podcast*

WATCH

BBC ONE A new six-part drama about the origins of the SAS during World War II, entitled *SAS: Rogue Heroes*, will be coming to BBC One and BBC iPlayer later this year

The poetry and protest of Siegfried Sassoon

He is remembered as one of the greatest poets of his generation. But what drove Siegfried Sassoon to decry the horrors of World War I so publicly, even when he risked facing the wrath of his own side?

Before Britain had declared its involvement in World War I, Siegfried Loraine Sassoon had signed up. He would later allude to "serious aspirations to heroism" that took him from his life of a country gentleman in Kent where he had been born on 8 September 1886, grown up in a wealthy family, and spent his twenties enjoying fox hunting, cricket and writing poetry to the battlefield in the name of king and country. Sassoon kept writing as a soldier: his verse befitting the jingoistic and glory fuelled works of many poets at the start of the war, like Rupert Brooke.

"War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise/And, fighting for our freedom, we are free," reads his 1915 poem, *Absolution*. And serving on the Western Front with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, Lieutenant Sassoon distinguished himself. He was awarded the Military Cross for his actions during a raid on a German trench, where he stayed for 90 minutes under fire to assist the wounded and dying. Such was his fearlessness once capturing a section of enemy trench singlehandedly – that his men nicknamed him 'Mad Jack'.

A CHANGE OF HEART

Sassoon was, for all intents and purposes, a good soldier, but he would become a vocal opponent to the war. In 1915, his younger brother Hamo was killed in the Gallipoli campaign and his poetry grew angry, bitter and acerbic. He depicted the suffering in the trenches and hospitals while satirising and condemning the military leaders who sent tens of thousands to their deaths. One of his 1917 poems starts with a general cheerily greeting troops on their way to Arras with a "Good morning, good morning!" before matter of factly being followed with the lines: "Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead/And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine".

Shortly after writing *The General* one of the dozens of anti-war poems he penned, making

Siegfried Sassoon with his wife, Hester. Prior to their marriage, the poet had relationships with several men

him a well known figure back in Britain Sassoon was wounded and sent to England to recover. He got to know several prominent pacifists, including the philosopher Bertrand Russell, and came to the decision that he must protest the continuation of the war and that he would do so publicly with an open letter to his commanding officer.

"I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority," began the missive, dated 15 June 1917. It went on to describe the purposes of the war as "evil and unjust", the soldiers as victims of "deception", and voiced the desire that his protest may help to "destroy the callous complacence with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise".

Sassoon's declaration risked a court martial, even execution, especially after being read out in the House of Commons and printed in newspapers. The military authorities instead hoped to discredit Sassoon by making out that he had gone mad as a result of neurasthenia, or shell shock, and sent him to the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland, for psychiatric care. While there, he witnessed the traumatic effects of shell shock and its often brutal methods of treatment, and wrote prolifically (completing some of his best poems, such as *Does it Matter?* and *Counter-Attack*).

BACK TO THE FRONT

It was his friendship with a patient that had the greater impact, however, for it was at Craiglockhart that he met and greatly influenced Wilfred Owen. The younger officer was a keen fan and his own style developed dramatically thanks to Sassoon's guidance and encouragement, leading to iconic poems like *Dulce et Decorum Est*, *Insensibility* and *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.

Before the year was out, both men had rejoined their regiments. The months at Craiglockhart had quelled Sassoon's protest and he chose to return to active service and not abandon his men. Yet, even then, his voice could not be silenced, as Sassoon published his poems in two collections entitled *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter Attack* (1918).

Sassoon survived the war, although barely, as he picked up a head wound when shot by a fellow British soldier who mistook him for a German. Owen was not so lucky, dying just a week before the Armistice. Sassoon went on to have a long and varied career, including as a newspaper's literary editor and a public speaker, before his death, at the age of 80, in 1967. For the rest of his life, his writing regularly returned to the horrors of warfare, notably in a critically acclaimed three volume semi autobiography.

Sassoon's angry, passionate and scathingly honest words deepened every generations' understanding of the utter horror and despair of World War I, or, as he calls it in his 1918 poem *Suicide in the Trenches*, "The hell where youth and laughter go".

WORDS: JONNY WILKES

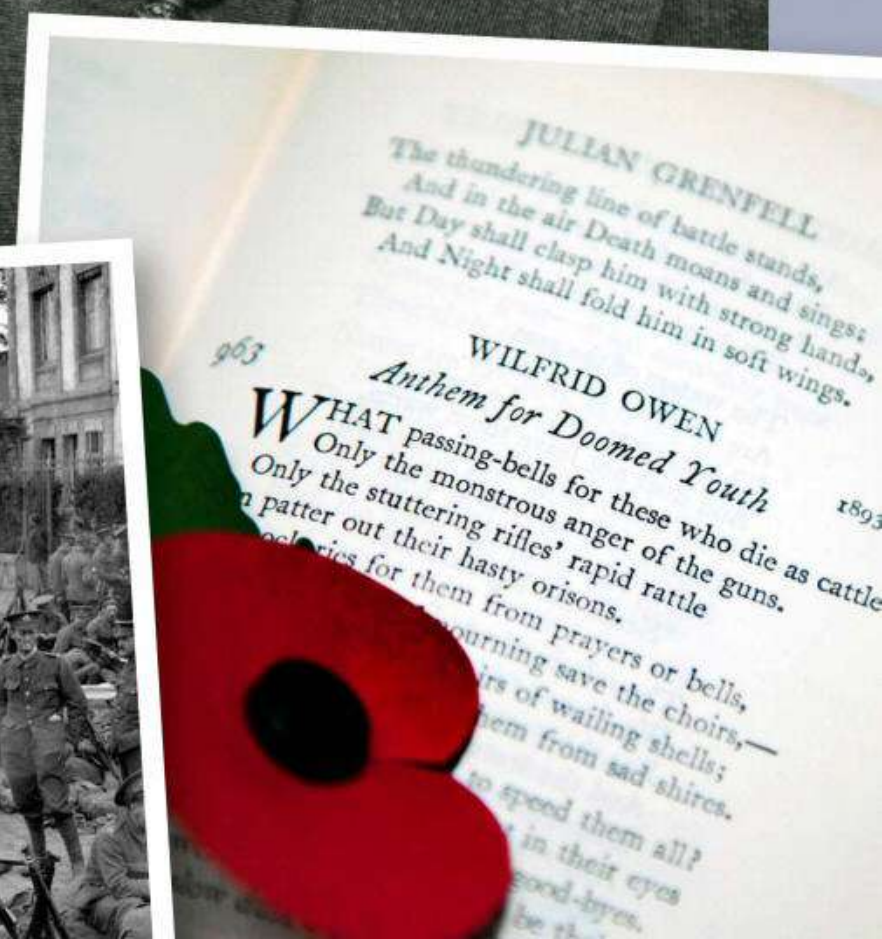
GETTYIMAGES X1, ALAMY X3

Siegfried Sassoon pictured in 1915. Although the poet had "serious aspirations to heroism" at the outbreak of World War I, it wasn't long before he was openly criticising the conflict and the politicians who were sending men to the trenches

"The authorities hoped to discredit Sassoon by making out that he had gone mad as a result of shell shock"

RIGHT: **Troops from the Royal Welch Fusiliers pictured in Belgium. Sassoon's time with the regiment was marked with distinction, earning a Military Cross in 1916 for his actions while storming a German trench**

FAR RIGHT: **Wilfred Owen's most famous poems, such as *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, were written with Sassoon's encouragement and advice**


JULIAN GRENFELL
The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air Death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.
963
WILFRID OWEN
Anthem for Doomed Youth
WHAT passing-bells for these who die as cattle
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
patter out their hasty orisons.
for them from prayers or bells,
rning save the choirs,—
of wailing shells;
m from sad shires.
speed them all?
in their eyes

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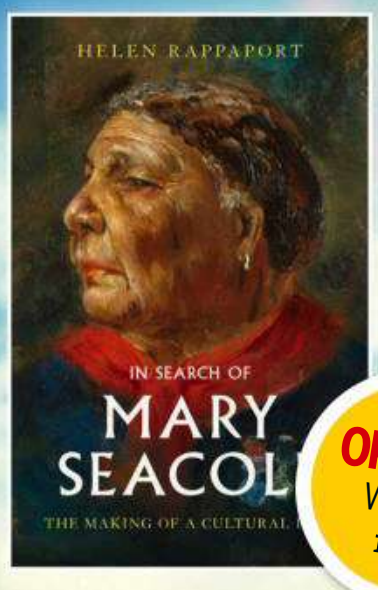

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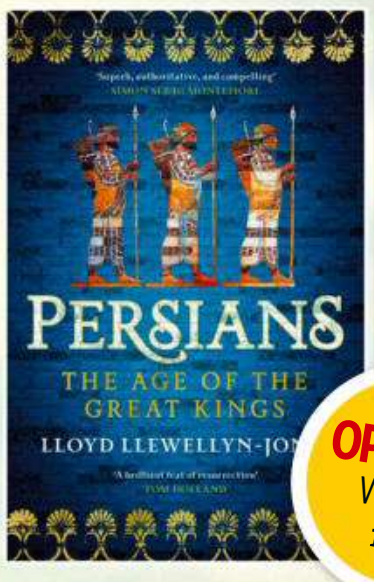

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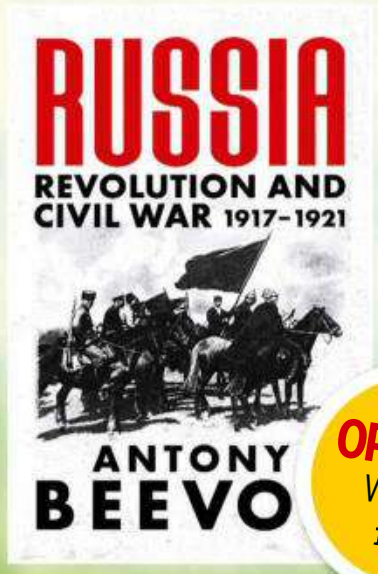

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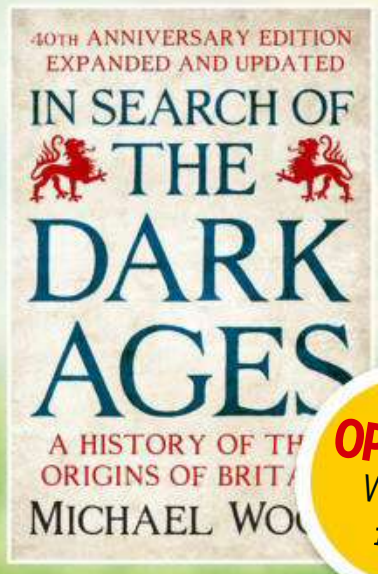

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PODCAST

Dr Nell Darby answers readers' questions about the history of crime and punishment on the *HistoryExtra* podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

ALAMY X4, GETTY X3, DREAMSTIME X2

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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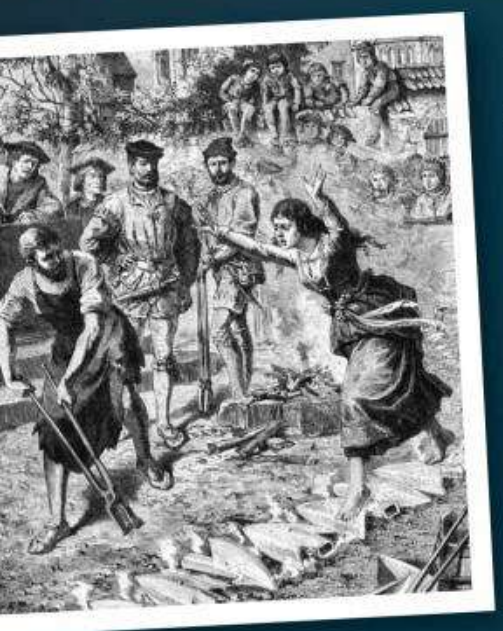
HISTORICAL CONSULTANT FOR THIS MONTH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE

DR NELL DARBY is an author and historian specialising in gender and crime in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nell's books include *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Pen and Sword, 2021), and she is also the host of the television series *Murder by the Sea*.

SEVEN CENTURIES OF LAW AND ORDER

1215



◀ **The withdrawal of support by the Church effectively ends the age-old** practice of 'trial by ordeal' as a way of determining a person's guilt. Four years **later, in January** 1219, Henry II introduces trial by petty jury in England.

1351

▼ An act of parliament under Edward III defines treason in law. Despite major amendments, it remains one of the earliest English statutes still in force.

1494

▶ The Vagabonds and Beggars Act provides measures for poor relief but dictates that "vagabonds, idle and suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water".

1839

▼ The Prisons Act introduces new initiatives to encourage prisoners to reflect on their crimes. Prisons are also encouraged to adopt the 'separate system', which sees prisoners completely isolated from each other.

1829

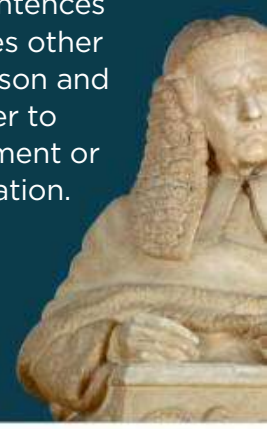
▶ A new, centralised police force is created in London. Constables earn a standard wage of one guinea (around £1.05 today) for six 12-hour shifts per week, with Sunday the only rest day.

1825

Home secretary (and later prime minister) Robert Peel reforms Britain's penal code, reducing the number of crimes punishable by death by 100. The focus is now on crime prevention and reforming criminals.

1823

▶ The Judgment of Death Act is enacted, allowing judges to commute death sentences for crimes other than treason and murder to imprisonment or transportation.



1842

A plain clothes detective department is set up at Scotland Yard. Its officers, who can go undercover, are tasked with investigating crimes, taking evidence, examining clues and dealing with witnesses and victims.

1868

The Capital Punishment Amendment Act ends the spectacle of public executions. From now on, condemned prisoners are executed within the walls of the prison in which they are being held, with their bodies buried in the prison grounds.

1888

▼ In August, Mary Ann Nichols becomes the first known victim of a serial killer who will later be dubbed Jack the Ripper. The murderer goes on to kill at least four more women, but is never apprehended.

1894

▶ The so-called **Bertillon system is adopted in Britain. Developed by French biometrics researcher and police officer Alphonse Bertillon in 1879, each felon's precise measurements** and distinctive **features are recorded on a standardised card, including a mugshot, allowing the police to track and** identify them.

GETTY IMAGES X9, ALAMY X6

From the introduction of jury trials to the abolition of the death penalty, we chart the evolution of crime and punishment in the British Isles

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

1571

The infamous 'Triple Tree' is erected at Tyburn in London (near the modern-day Marble Arch). The scaffold's triangular shape allows several executions to take place at the same time; in June 1649, 24 people are hanged simultaneously.

1623

Under an act of James VI and I, those accused of a crime can no longer claim protection from the law inside a church. Previously, felons could claim sanctuary for up to 40 days before deciding to either attend trial or go into exile.

1688–1820

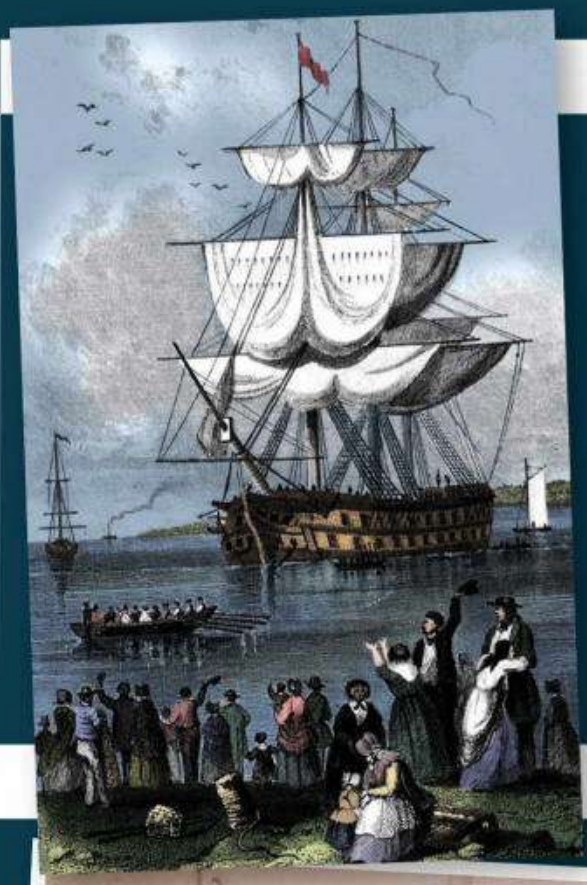
▲ The number of capital statutes in England and Wales increases from 50 to at least 200. Offences that now carry the death sentence can be as minor as wrecking a fishpond.

1725

▼ Self-proclaimed 'thief-taker general' Jonathan Wild (*pictured arresting a suspect, below*) is hanged at Tyburn. The felon had been running a criminal empire while assuming a crimefighting role – mainly to remove his own rivals.

1800

The Glasgow Police Act – the first of its kind in Britain – receives royal assent on 30 June. Three months later, Glasgow merchant John Stenhouse is appointed Master of Police and appoints three sergeants and six police officers.



1787–1868

◄ In May 1787, more than 1,400 people set sail on 11 ships bound for Australia. Among them are some 700 convicts – the first of the more than 162,000 prisoners who will be transported Down Under between 1787 and 1868.

1749

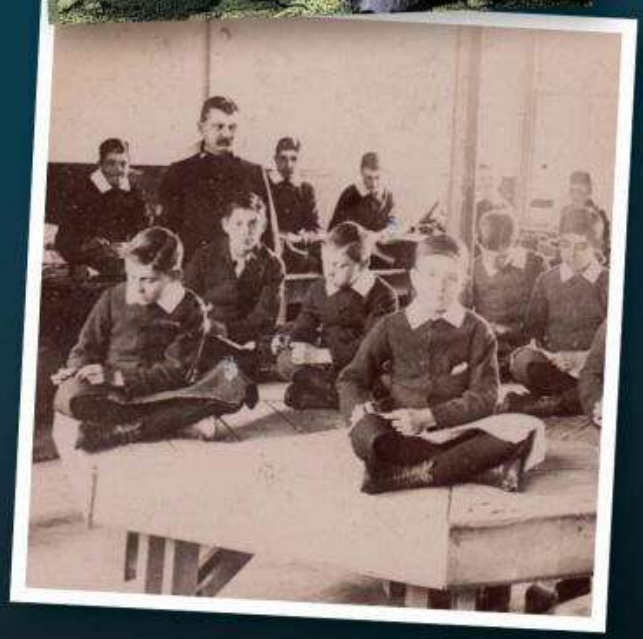
◄ Magistrate and author Henry Fielding and his half-brother, John, establish the Bow Street Runners, a group often referred to as London's first professional police force.

1739

Notorious butcher-turned-highwayman Dick Turpin is hanged for stealing horses. His life of crime and brutality will later be given a romantic and heroic twist in William Harrison Ainsworth's 19th-century novel, *Rookwood*.

1902

► The pre-existing Borstal prison near Rochester, Kent (now HMP Rochester), becomes Britain's first juvenile correctional facility for young people aged 16–21. Inmates follow a strict regime centred around physical drills, training and education.



1908

The Children's Act establishes separate juvenile courts and introduces the registration of foster parents. A minimum age for execution – of 16 years – is also stipulated.

1933

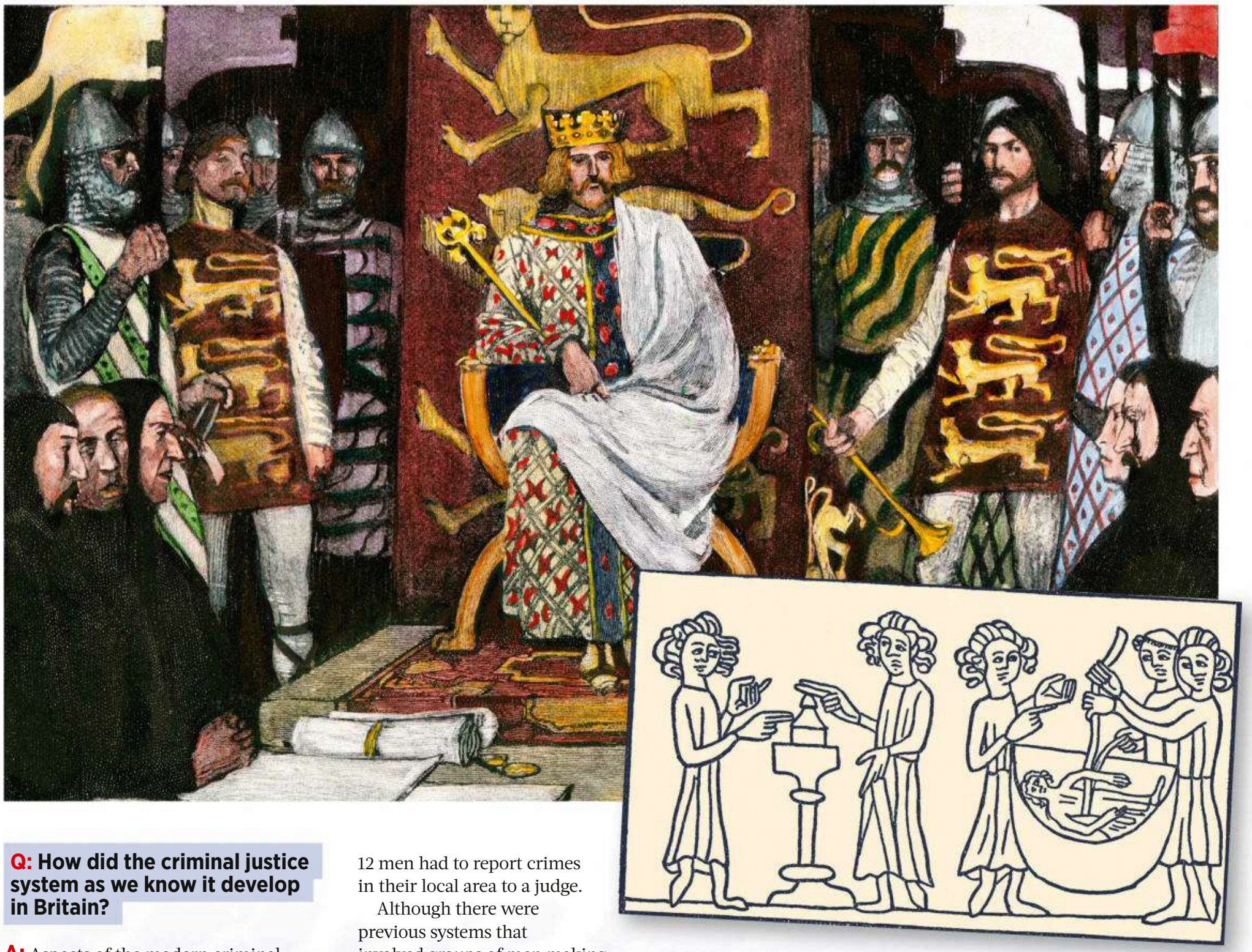
▼ The first open prison is built at New Hall Camp near Wakefield. Other open prisons, including HMP Ford (*below*) follow over the next decades.

1964

Peter Anthony Allen and Gwynne Owen Evans become the last people in Britain to be executed. In 1998, the Human Rights Act abolishes the death penalty in all circumstances. ⊙

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Crime historian **Dr Nell Darby** answers key questions about the evolution of law and order in the British Isles



ABOVE: **A medieval scene shows a suspect being subjected to trial by ordeal – in this case, being submerged in a body of water**

MAIN: **The trial by jury system was introduced by King Henry II**

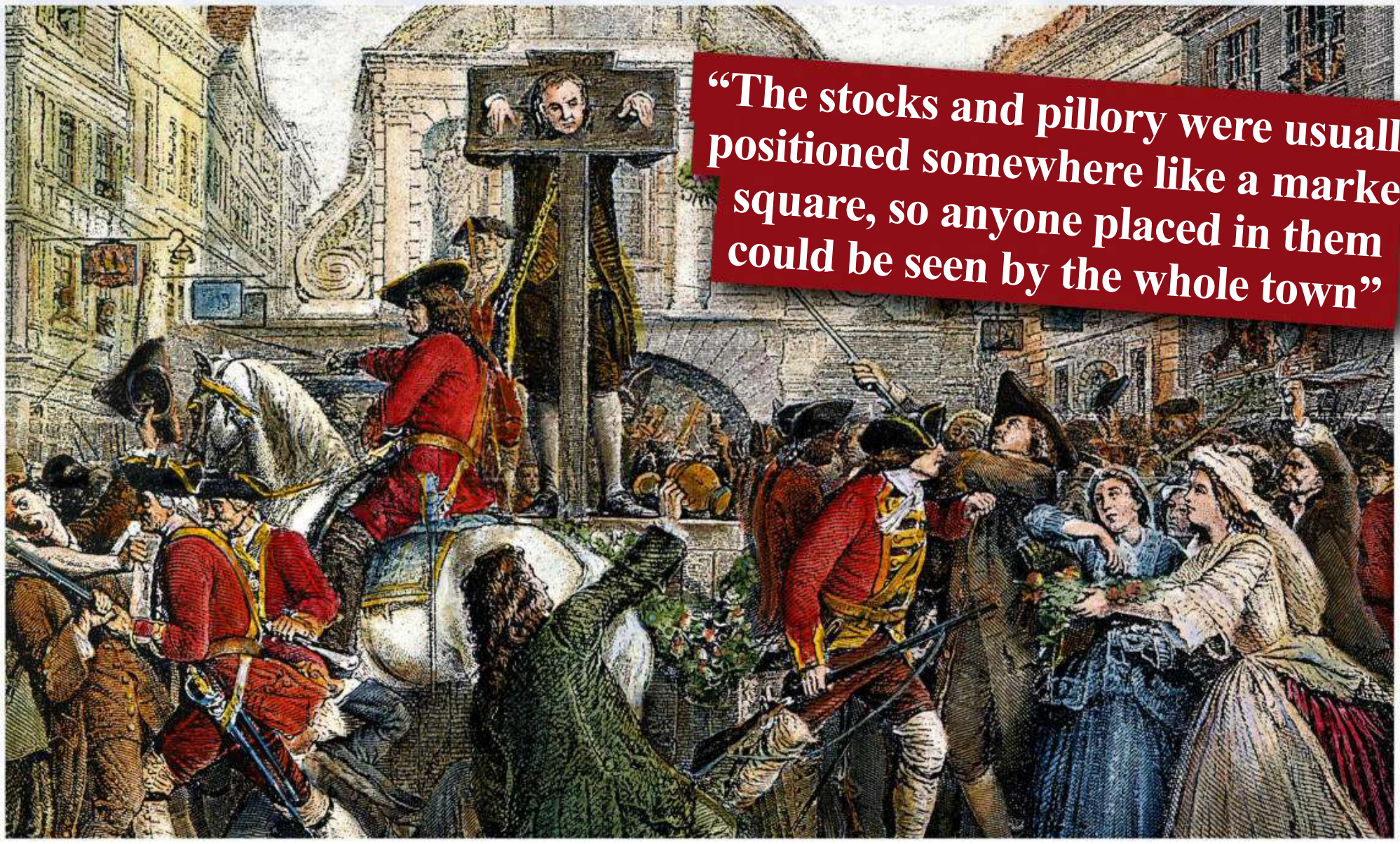
GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X5

Q: How did the criminal justice system as we know it develop in Britain?

A: Aspects of the modern criminal justice system can be traced back to the 12th and 13th centuries, such as the introduction of trial by jury, which emerged during the reign of Henry II [r1154 89]. He established that 12 free men should be assigned to act in land disputes, but he also introduced the use of a grand jury in assize courts, where 12 men had to report crimes in their local area to a judge.

Although there were previous systems that involved groups of men making decisions, it was only during this period that the concept developed further and became more recognisably modern. Prior to this, crimes were dealt with using trial by ordeal, which would involve subjecting people to extreme punishments, torturing them to see whether they were guilty or innocent.

The introduction of trial by jury was a real marker of the civilisation of society, if you like. And then you had Magna Carta in 1215, in which being afforded trial by jury was made an explicit right.



"The stocks and pillory were usually positioned somewhere like a market square, so anyone placed in them could be seen by the whole town"

Q: Are there any punishments of the past that we would find ludicrous today?

A: There have been many bizarre methods of punishment throughout history. For example, there were things like the ducking stool or cucking stool a long construct with a stool at one end, to which the offender would be strapped and then dunked into a body of water. People could also be forced to wear contraptions such as the scold's bridle (*see page 43*), which was sometimes known as the branks. These methods of punishment were targeted at local gossips, and it was mainly women who were on the receiving end of them.

Many punishments of the past involved being paraded in the streets, where the main aim was to embarrass or humiliate the accused in front of their peers. And the stocks and the pillory were similar in that they were usually positioned somewhere like a market square right in the centre of the local community so that anyone placed in them would be seen by the whole town.

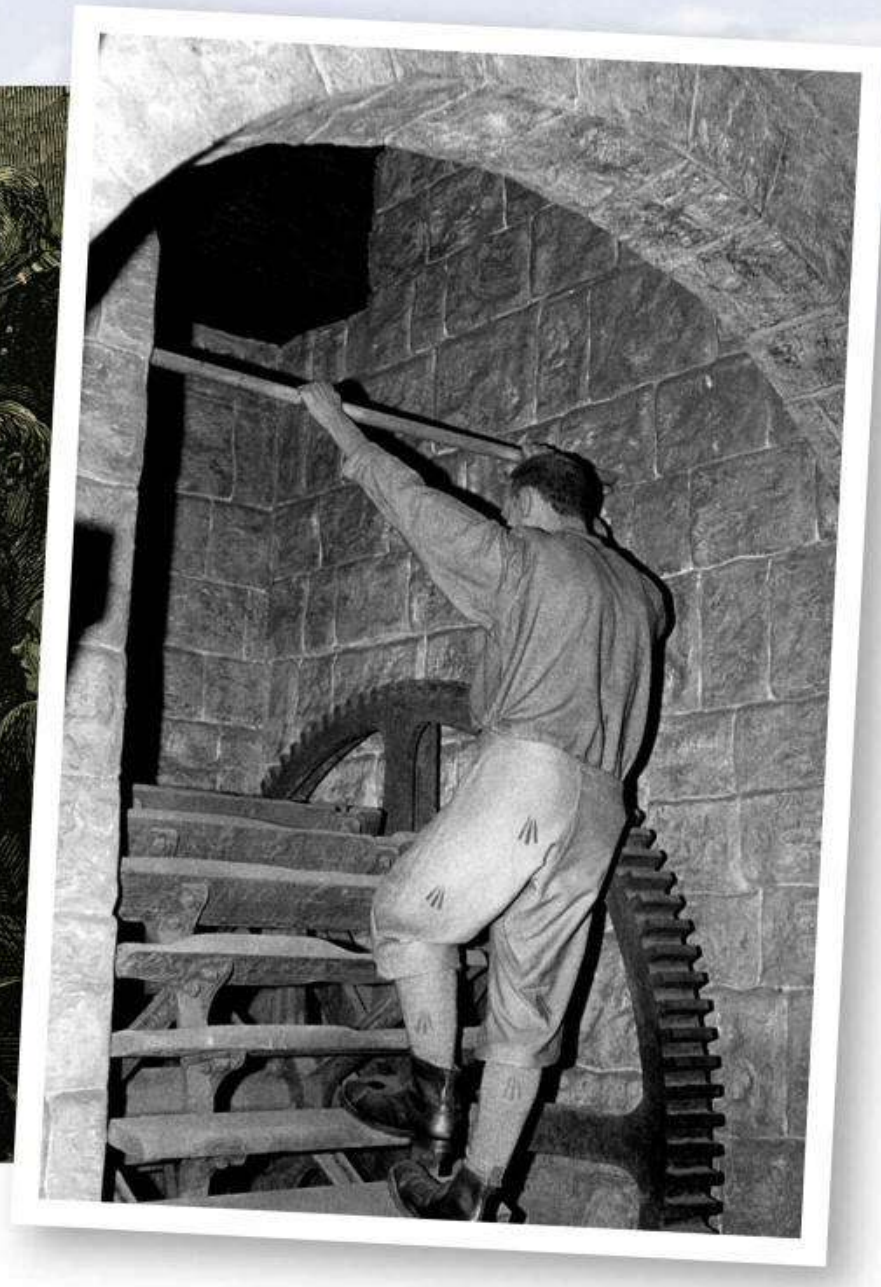
This did sometimes backfire, however. In 1703, the writer and journalist Daniel Defoe was put in the pillory for seditious libel following publication of his pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, but he allegedly had people throwing flowers at him, instead of fruit and veg, as a show of support. More severely, branding was also another form of punishment, meaning that a person's criminality was forever evident on their skin.

Regarding capital punishment, although hanging had been the most common method of execution since Anglo-Saxon times, there were other methods of killing people. Women who committed 'petty treason' by murdering their spouse, for instance, could be burned at the stake. It was seen as particularly abhorrent to kill one's husband and therefore warranted a particularly severe punishment one more severe than hanging.

Certainly, up until the late 18th century, women were generally expected to have rather circumscribed lives in a domestic arena. If a woman went outside of that arena or if she behaved in an 'unfeminine' way, she was seen to have transgressed. And this is particularly evident in terms of sexuality: if a woman gave birth

ABOVE: **Rather than being pelted with fruit and vegetables, Daniel Defoe was showered with flowers after being placed in a pillory for seditious libel in 1703**

BELOW: **Punishments such as being forced to wear a scold's bridle (*left*) or being dunked in water using a ducking stool (*right*) were intended to be humiliating**



“There was this assumption that certain members of the working classes were inherently criminal”

ABOVE: **The 19th century marked a shift towards reforming and educating prisoners (*left*), rather than subjecting them to punishments like the treadwheel (*right*)**

BELOW: **Some ‘experts’ believed it was possible to determine a person’s criminality by their physical characteristics**

◀ to an illegitimate child, she could be punished for it, whereas the man who fathered the child was only required to be financially responsible for them.

I’ve seen cases in magistrates’ notes where a woman who gave birth to more than one illegitimate child was actually sent to prison. To transgress once might have been seen as a mistake that could be rectified, but if she gave birth to further illegitimate children, then that made her a miscreant and she had to be punished for it.

Q: When did the concept of rehabilitation instead of punishment first emerge?

A: In 1779 there was the introduction of the Penitentiary Act, which made rehabilitation a part of the prison experience. But it was very basic and included solitary confinement, which obviously didn’t have much of an impact in rehabilitating prisoners: it just broke their mental health instead.

It wasn’t until the late 19th century and early 20th century that moves were made to improve how prisoners were rehabilitated, with differentiation between young offenders and older offenders. Before then, young people could be placed in prison with older, more ‘experienced’ prisoners, which as people discovered wasn’t a particularly good idea. For example, if you went in young, having committed a petty theft out of economic need, you could end up into prison with older lags who would teach you how to commit more serious crimes. You would come out a more hardened criminal than when you went in!

As such, there was a growing realisation that there were several fundamental things that needed to change about the treatment of prisoners, which might lead to a better chance of rehabilitating them.

Q: Why, in the past, was there a tendency to criminalise poor people rather than assist them?

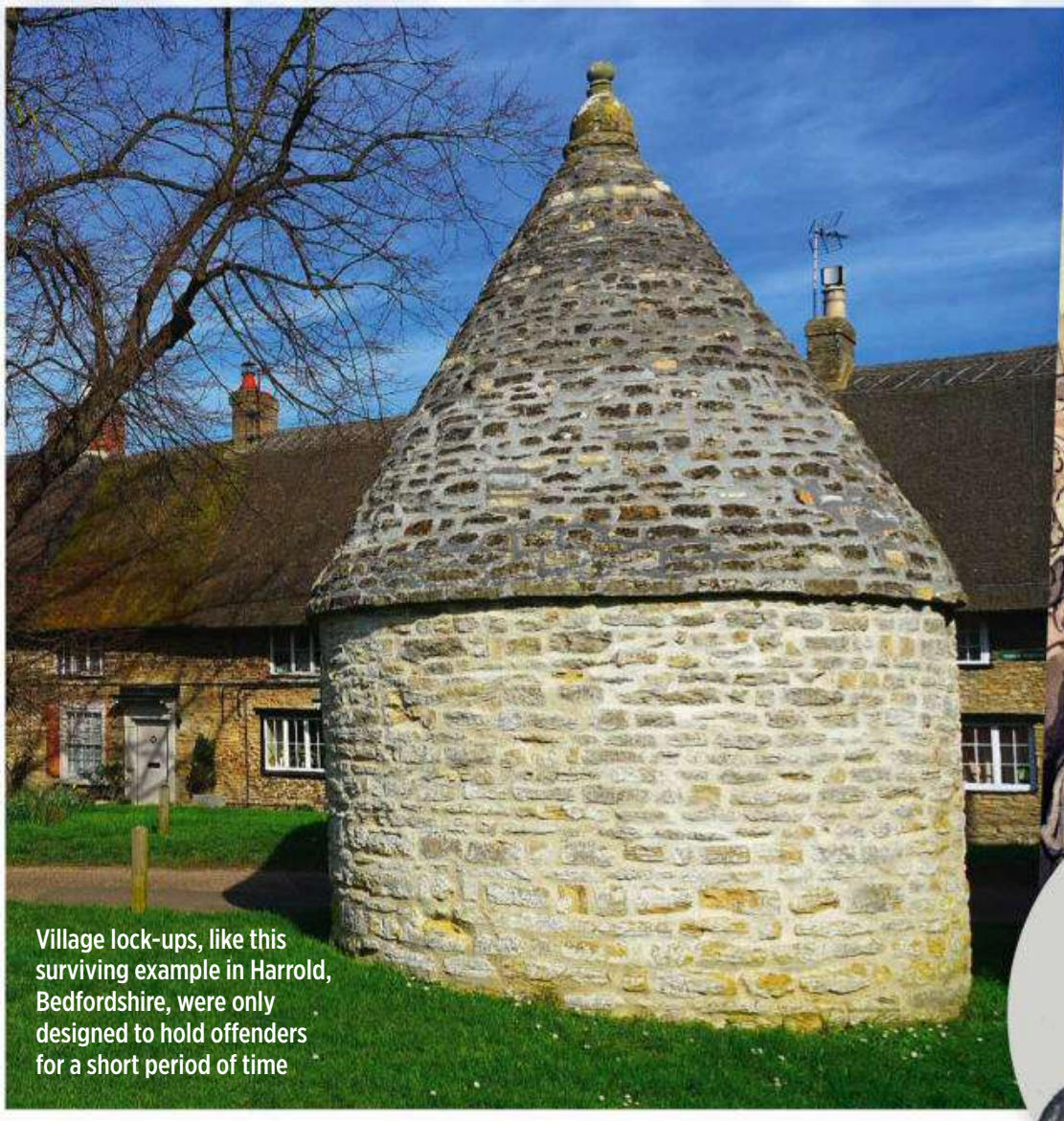
A: In the 19th century, a theory began to develop about the so called ‘criminal classes’, which reflected the number of petty offences being committed by the poorest members of the society. And you see it not only in criminal records, but also in newspaper reports from the time.

In fact, Victorian newspapers are particularly fascinating in terms of how they chose to depict people from marginalised communities. There was this assumption that certain members of the working classes were inherently criminal: that they needed to be punished if they didn’t have any money; that they needed to have as uncomfortable a life as possible; that they would never work for an honest living if you gave them too many privileges, and so on.

And you can see this change in the workhouses, too, which got stricter in terms of the life they offered the poor, and the restrictions on the types of relief that was available. People from certain communities were seen to have been ‘born’ criminal.

Added to this, there was also the development of a new criminal identification system, which started in France and then spread elsewhere, which led to attempts to determine who might be a criminal according to their facial measurements and how they looked. It’s possible to see how this might have led people from particular backgrounds to be seen in a more negative sense by the courts.

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X4



Village lock-ups, like this surviving example in Harrold, Bedfordshire, were only designed to hold offenders for a short period of time

Q: When did we start locking people away for their crimes?

A: Prisons have existed in some form since at least the 12th century, with buildings such as castles being used to house prisoners. Eventually, small, purpose built prisons started to emerge, which weren't designed for the long term housing of inmates, but might have been used to hold somebody who was waiting to go to court, or someone who had been convicted and was awaiting execution.

In rural communities you might have found lock ups, where a watchman or parish constable could hold somebody overnight until they could be taken to the local magistrate the next morning. Again, however, this was a short term solution they couldn't have held people for months or years.

It was mainly when the transportation of criminals ended in the 19th century that there was a growing need for larger types of prison that could hold inmates for longer. It was the philosopher Jeremy Bentham [1748 1832], who is credited with designing a style of prison called the panopticon, in which staff could observe inmates in their cells from a central rotunda. The belief was that prisoners would behave if they thought someone could be looking at them at any time.

Q: What was behind the move towards mass incarceration rather than the death sentence?

A: During the 19th century there was a definite shift in mood, driven by the idea that a person couldn't learn from their crime if they were dead. If you put them in prison, however, then they had a long period of time to think about what they had done, learn from it, and try and reform themselves.

Ultimately, people began to recognise that executing offenders for their crimes might not have the best effect in either improving someone's morals or in actually punishing them.

Q: Are there any moments in the history of capital punishment that you think are particularly important?

A: I think the biggest change took place between the 1840s and 1860s, when people began to look upon the spectacle of public executions with increasing horror.

This was demonstrated in 1849, when the novelist Charles Dickens went to Horsemonger Lane Gaol to see the hanging of Maria and Frederick Manning, who had been convicted of the killing of Maria's lover in Bermondsey.

ABOVE: **Maria Manning** was hanged alongside her husband, Frederick (*right*), after both being convicted of murder in 1849. The execution was attended by author Charles Dickens, who was appalled by the behaviour of the crowd

TOP: **Public executions were rowdy affairs that often attracted pickpockets – as can be seen in the bottom right corner of this illustration from the early 19th century**

Public executions were still seen as a day out for many people, and a form of entertainment. There would be things to buy, such as broadsheets, and it was also an opportunity for people to commit petty offences like pickpocketing. Public executions had really become a bit of a free for all.

Dickens was absolutely horrified by what he saw and the fact that most of the revellers in attendance seemed to have forgotten that two people were dying that day. He and others began to question the point of public hangings, and, from 1868, executions took place behind prison walls to stop such events being viewed as something to enjoy.

INTERVIEW: RACHEL DINNING
WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

DR NELL DARBY is a crime historian specialising in gender and crime in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Her most recent book is *Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain* (Pen and Sword, 2021)

KEEPING THE PEACE

With no formal police force, maintaining law and order in medieval and Tudor England was very much a community affair

The pillory was a common form of punishment across medieval Europe

In medieval and Tudor England, it could seem like crime was around every corner. People stealing food and small amounts of money were the most prevalent offences, but murder rates were many times higher than they are today, and gangs of weapon-wielding men might be seen marauding across the land.

Perhaps this is unsurprising in a country that had no formal police force. But that's not to say there was no way of maintaining law and order at all. In the early medieval period, policing was seen primarily as a community effort. Although an official known as the shire reeve would investigate major crimes and stamp out riots with the help of a posse of local men, the task of day-to-day law enforcement fell on villagers themselves. For instance, if someone saw a crime happening nearby, they would raise the 'hue and cry' – this involved shouting at the top of their lungs so other villagers would hear and join them, before they all gave chase to the felon.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

As the Middle Ages progressed, villagers were given more support to tackle crime. From 1250 onwards, each village had a constable, who would help maintain the peace and take charge of the hue and cry. The constables got no remuneration for their efforts – they were generally members of the gentry, and it was seen as part of their social responsibilities. Similarly, town watchmen – first appointed during the reign of Edward I (1272–1307) – were also expected to carry out their duties without receiving any pay, or at least only a very modest sum. Every local man was expected to work as a watchman at some point, although the role mainly involved rather minor duties, such as telling people the time and helping inebriated people stagger home, rather than taking on hardened criminals.

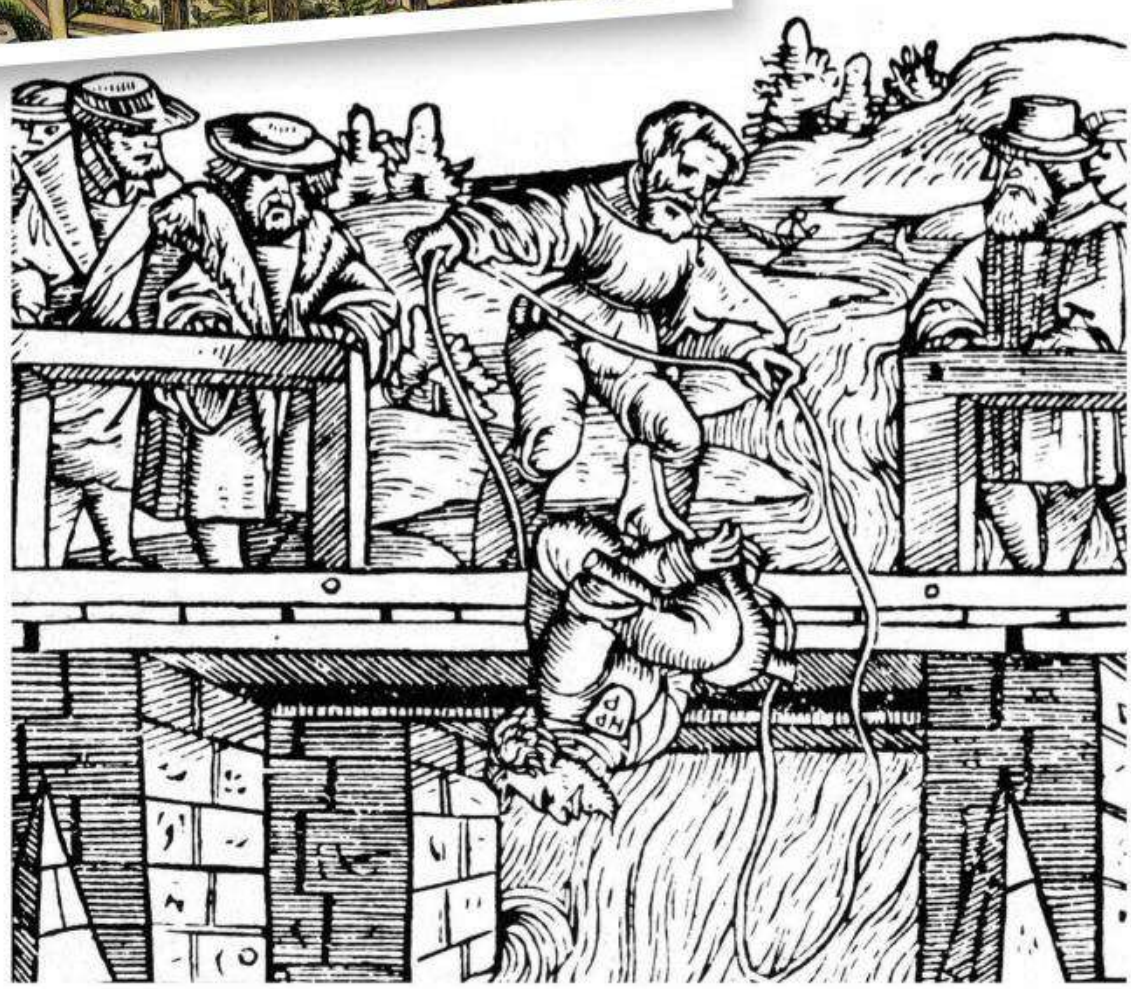
In the 14th century, the shire reeve was replaced by the justice of the peace, who was typically a wealthy landowner. Acting as magistrates for smaller crimes like brawling, they kept order in the streets – and keeping the streets themselves maintained was in their remit, too. In the Tudor period, the justices of the peace grew even more important: from 1554 they could place

"Punishments were often carried out in public to humiliate the criminal even further"

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X4

LEFT: **Trial by combat was a particularly violent way of settling grievances between two opposing parties**

BELOW: **Subjecting a defendant to trial by ordeal – which could involve hurling them into a pond – relied on divine intervention to determine their guilt**



suspects under arrest and hold them for questioning for up to three days.

But what actually constituted a crime in this period? As well as obvious offences such as murder and theft, there were a range of transgressions that we wouldn't even recognise as crimes now. For the Tudors, simply being homeless and out of work was regarded as a crime – and one they punished by branding someone with the letter 'V' for 'vagrant'. And in the deeply religious medieval and Tudor eras, heresy was punishable by beheading or burning at the stake.

TRIAL AND TERROR

Religion played another key role in crime and punishment in the early medieval period: it was crucial in determining whether someone was innocent or guilty. Sometimes, an accused person would have to undergo trial by ordeal, where they would be forced to perform a painful task, such as plucking a stone from a pail of boiling water. If their wounds were gone in three days, it was believed God had intervened to prove their innocence – but if their hand was still shiny with burns, they were deemed guilty. Trial by combat, in which the two parties would fight to the death, was also a way of settling scores – with God always believed to be on the winner's side. In 1215 these trials were largely replaced with trial by jury. Under this new system, 12 men would decide between them who was guilty – and how they should be punished.

Medieval and Tudor people believed punishment should be severe, as it was meant to be in retribution. Punishments were often carried out in public, too, to humiliate the criminal even further – and deter others from turning to crime. The most serious offences, such as treason, were punishable by death. Commoners would typically be hanged, whereas the nobility were beheaded – such as Mary, Queen of Scots, who met her end in 1587.

For less serious crimes, like being drunk in public, people were thrown into the stocks or pillory for hours, where people could hurl rotten food at their heads. Offenders were also landed with heavy fines. In the medieval and Tudor world, it really did pay to be well-behaved.

WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES

THREE BIZARRE MEDIEVAL CRIMES

These innocuous acts would have landed you in trouble during the Middle Ages...

PLAYING FOOTBALL

▼ Medieval football was more of a brutal than a beautiful game, with players sometimes killed as their teams battled to drag a pig's bladder from one end of town to another (although the exact 'rules' varied from place to place). From 1314, the sport was banned in London, and in 1410, those caught playing it could be imprisoned for six days.

EATING A THREE-COURSE DINNER

▼ In 1336, Edward III was outraged that his subjects were trying to mimic their 'social betters' by eating multi-course feasts, so he passed a statute banning all ranks from eating a meal consisting of more than two courses, with Christmas and certain other festivals being the only times a three-course meal was permissible. It doesn't seem the law was enforced – but it didn't leave the statute books until 1856.

WEARING POINTY SHOES

▼ Medieval men were punished for crimes against fashion, and this continued in the Tudor period. Shoes with pointed ends called 'pikes' were popular, but getting out of control – some were so lengthy that they needed to be secured with a tie around the ankle. A 1463 statute in London prohibited "any shoes or boots having spikes or points which exceed the length of two inches", and law-breakers were fined three shillings and four pence (over £100 today).

GODLY BUTCHERY

In medieval England, the crime of treason was so heinous that it required a punishment that would horrify as much as it would deter. **Dr Rebecca Simon** discusses a method of execution reserved only for the worst of the worst

In 1241, a man named William Marise, the son of an English nobleman, was convicted of piracy. His punishment was to be publicly ripped apart into four pieces.

It was known then as 'godly butchery' or 'three deaths'. Today, we recognise this gruesome method of execution – one that was unique to England and is synonymous with the medieval period – as being hanged, drawn and quartered.

But why was Marise forced to meet such a gruesome end? Committing piracy was considered an attack on the sovereign and therefore classed as treason. Treason was worse than murder, since it was said to challenge the God-given order of kingdom and society, and as such, had to be punished in the most severe way possible. When Marise suffered the fate in 1242 – the first person in recorded history to do so – he was considered the worst of all criminals: a traitor.

But more than a punishment, the purpose of hanging, drawing and quartering was to establish the boundaries of normal behaviour. The people who deserved such an end were not meant to be seen as human, and the pain, humiliation and brutality was intended to create a separation between the audience and the condemned. The message was that 'normal' men would not suffer the 'three deaths'.

The fact that the method inflicted pain for so long meant it practically became an art form. This served to justify the state's decision to carry out such an act and present a warning to anyone who might consider violating the social order between country and king.

A GRUESOME SPECTACLE

Being hanged, drawn and quartered was a multifaceted process of torture and humiliation, performed in front of large, eager crowds. In fact, so barbaric was the method that it could only be carried out on men, as it was deemed indecent to expose a woman's body to the quartering treatment; the more likely punishment for a woman convicted of treason would be burning at the stake.

First, the condemned man was dragged to their place of execution on a horse-drawn hurdle (a type of sled), perhaps while being lashed, leaving them covered with painful lacerations before the real agony had even begun. This is one possible meaning of the 'drawn' (as in 'drawn' by the horse).

The next step was hanging, with the condemned having a rope tied around their neck before being yanked off the ground, sometimes with the assistance of a pulley. There, he would dangle and thrash around helplessly until just before he fell into unconsciousness, at which point he would be lowered to the ground and disembowelled in front of the horrified, yet morbidly fascinated, audience.

The disembowelling of the unlucky individual is the second possible meaning of 'drawn', although it could perhaps refer to both actions. According to the *Chronicle of Lanercost* – a history of northern English and Scottish life covering parts of the 13th century and 14th century – the Scottish rebel William Wallace, who was executed in this way, suffered the further indignity of having his entrails burned in front of him.

Finally, the unfortunate victim was quartered. Sometimes, this was achieved by tying each of his limbs to a different horse, which were then startled into running in different directions so as to rip the body apart. The sundered corpse was then displayed on city gates across the country – popular sites for the head included London Bridge and Westminster Hall – to serve both as a warning to would-be traitors and an advertisement of the consequences of betraying your sovereign.

DID YOU KNOW?

FRENCH CONNECTION

The last person to be hanged, drawn and quartered in England was David Tyrie, a Portsmouth civil servant who was convicted of passing naval secrets to France in 1782. According to one account, he was hanged for 23 minutes before being butchered.

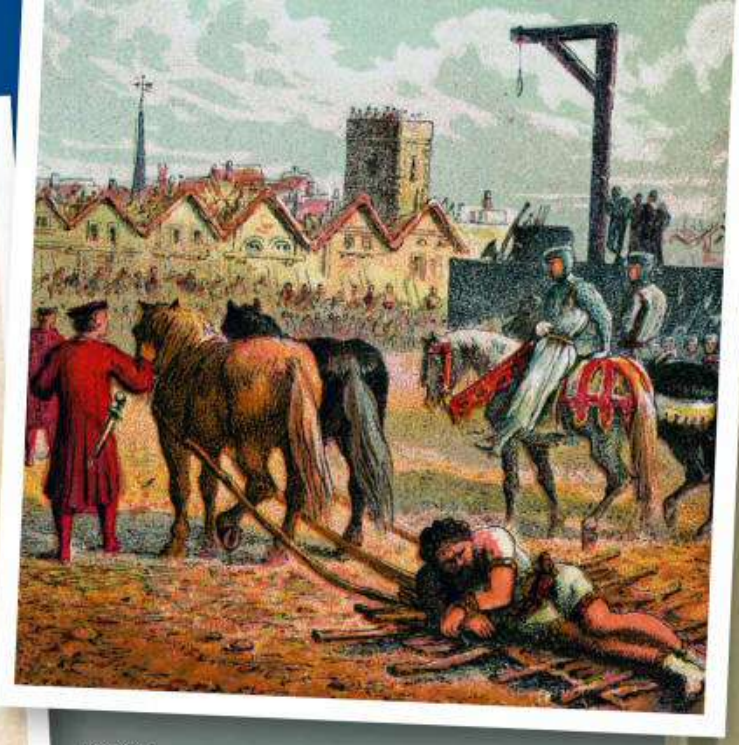
By the late 18th century, it was rare for hanging, drawing and quartering to be carried out, even when sentenced. That was later exemplified in 1839, when some 10,000 Chartists – calling for political reform – led a massive armed rebellion in Newport, south Wales. The leaders were caught and sentenced, but the executions were commuted to transportation to Australia instead.

Hanging, drawing and quartering was finally abolished altogether thanks to the passage of the Forfeiture Act of 1870, thus ending one of the longest traditions of public executions in history. Given our ongoing fascination with the notorious medieval method, however, its legacy is far from dead.

DR REBECCA SIMON is a historian specialising in early modern piracy and the history of executions. Her latest book is *Why We Love Pirates: The Hunt for Captain Kidd and How He Changed Piracy Forever* (Mango Media, 2020)

A drawing shows pirate William Marise, convicted of treason against Henry III in 1241, being dragged to his grisly execution at the Tower of London

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3



ABOVE:
Scottish rebel William Wallace was hanged, drawn and quartered for treason in 1305, despite claiming that he had never been a subject of England's Edward I in the first place

LEFT: The head of Jeremiah Brandreth, who was supposed to suffer the same fate in 1817. However, the 'quartering' part of his sentence was commuted, and he was instead beheaded after being hanged

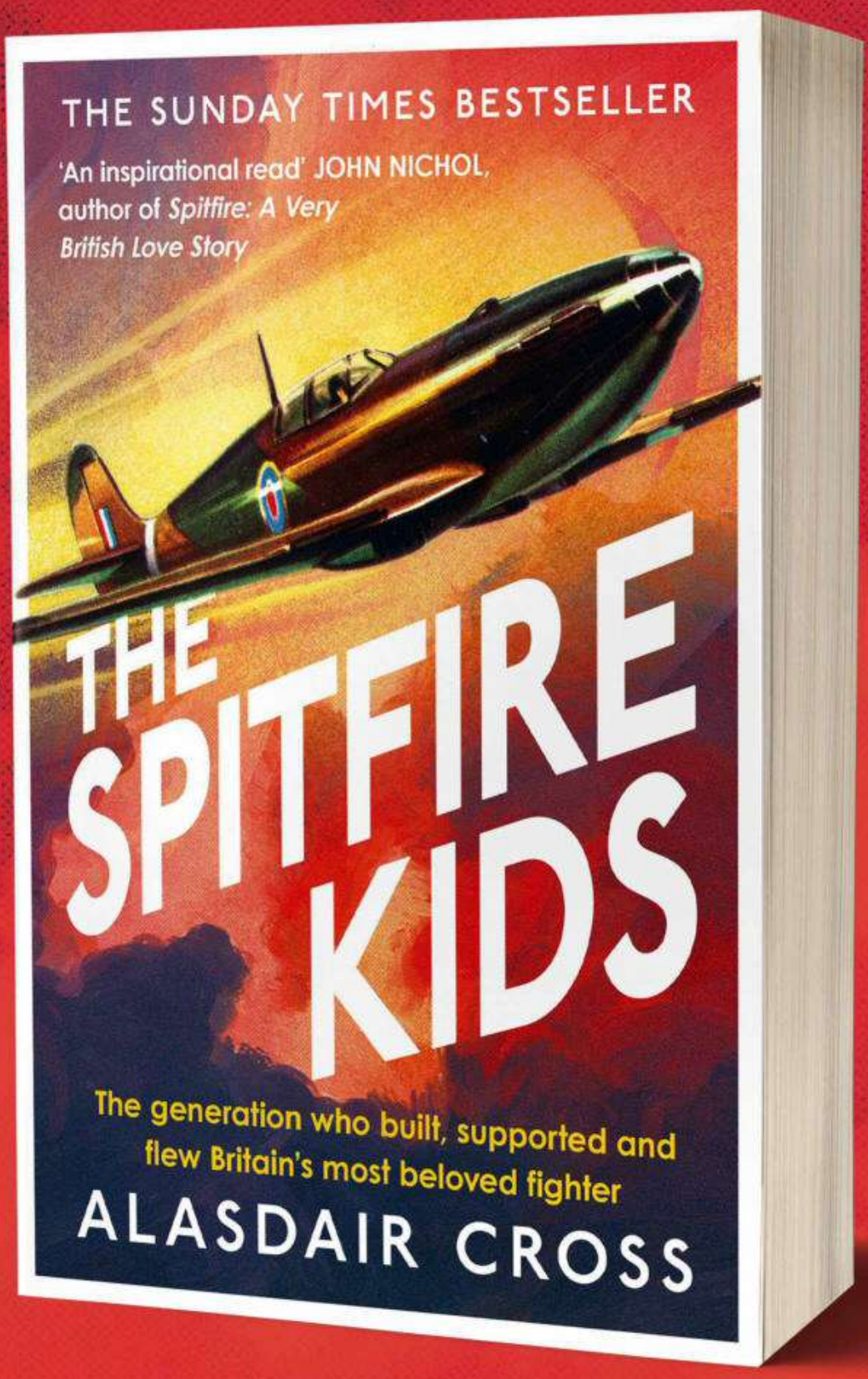
An illustration depicting the execution of Hugh le Despenser the Younger, convicted of high treason in 1326. As well as being disembowelled, his genitals were sliced off and burned in front of him

"Being hanged, drawn and quartered was a multifaceted process of humiliation, performed in front of large, eager crowds"

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

A story of young people tested to the very limits of their endurance.

Young people who won a battle that turned a war.


THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
'An inspirational read' JOHN NICHOL, author of *Spitfire: A Very British Love Story*
THE SPITFIRE KIDS
The generation who built, supported and flew Britain's most beloved fighter
ALASDAIR CROSS

'A truly epic account'
SUNDAY TIMES

'An inspirational read'
JOHN NICHOL

'A story of heroism'
THE HERALD

BIZARRE LAWS

From walking cows to beating rugs, how many of these offences have you committed?

IT IS STILL ILLEGAL TO...

... ENTER THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT WEARING A SUIT OF ARMOUR

▼ Enacted in 1313 during the reign of Edward II, the statute was meant to prevent nobles from using the **threat of armed force as a way of applying pressure** on parliament. It didn't necessarily do the trick, **though, as Thomas, 2nd** Earl of Lancaster, **cousin to Edward II and one of the king's chief opponents, attended at least three parliaments in arms between 1316** and 1319.

... BE DRUNK ON LICENSED PREMISES

As strange as it might seem – and despite no doubt being broken most weekends – under section 12 of the Licensing Act 1872, "every person found drunk... on any licensed premises, shall be liable to a penalty".

... BE DRUNK IN CHARGE OF A COW

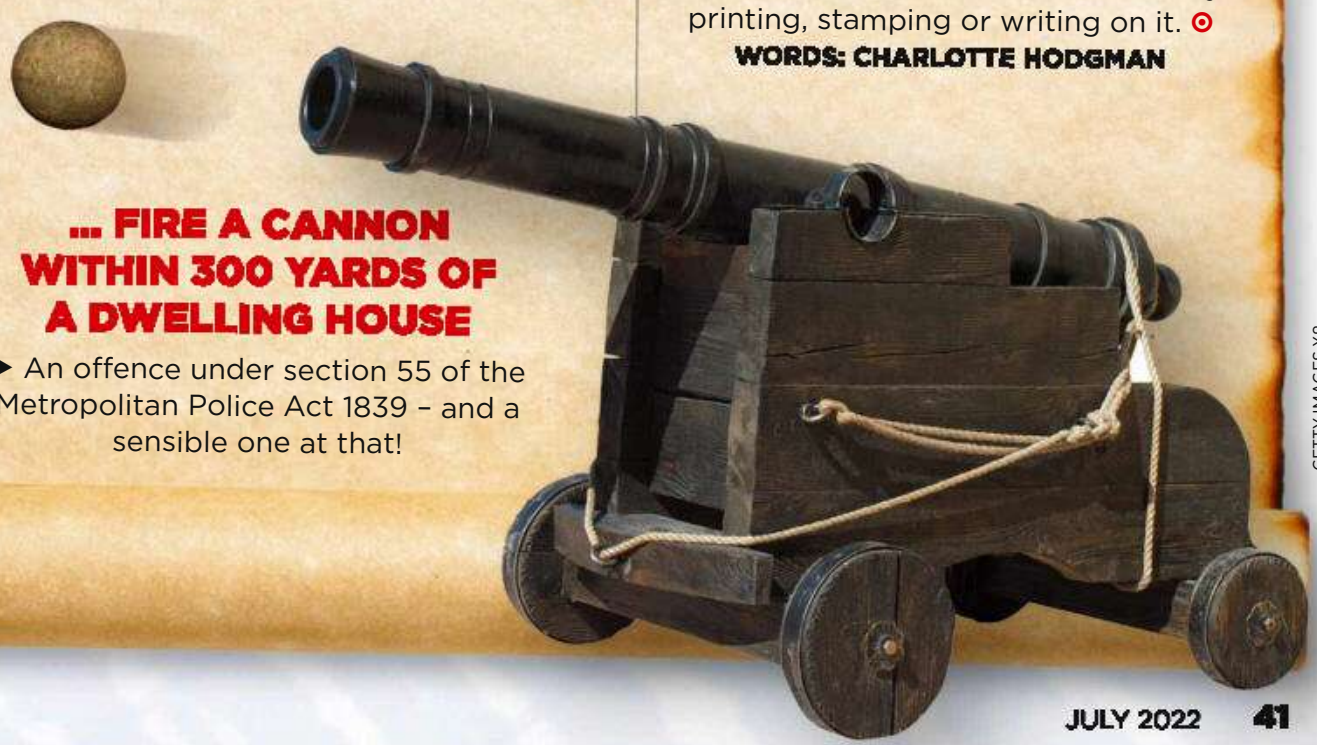
▼ Under the Licensing Act 1872, you can still be arrested for being intoxicated while in charge of a horse, cow, carriage or steam engine.

... KEEP A BEACHED WHALE OR STURGEON WITHOUT ROYAL PERMISSION

▲ Although it is now illegal to catch either creature, the 14th-century statute *Prerogativa Regis* dictated that any whale or sturgeon found on the coast be offered to the monarch. Indeed, a 264lb sturgeon caught off Swansea Bay in 2004 was offered to – and politely declined by – the royal household. Whilst it is illegal to sell the now-protected species, a sturgeon refused by the Palace can be kept or given away for free.

... BEAT OR SHAKE A CARPET OR RUG IN THE STREET

For anyone looking to get a head start on a spring clean, this law still stands; what's more, it is also illegal to erect a washing line across a street, keep a pigsty in front of your house, and to sing profane or obscene songs or ballads in the street.



... FIRE A CANNON WITHIN 300 YARDS OF A DWELLING HOUSE

▶ An offence under section 55 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 – and a sensible one at that!

... DRIVE COWS DOWN A ROADWAY WITHOUT PERMISSION

According to the Metropolitan Streets Act 1867, anyone wishing to drive cattle through the streets between 10am and 7pm should seek permission from the Commissioner of Police.

... CARRY A PLANK ALONG A PAVEMENT

Under section 54 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, it is an offence to carry a plank of wood along a pavement, as well as fly kites, play annoying games, and slide on ice or snow in the street.

... DEFACE MONEY

Before you scribble your shopping list on the back of a £5 note, you might want to bear in mind that, under the Currency and Banknotes Act 1928, it is an offence to deface a banknote by printing, stamping or writing on it.

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

GETTY IMAGES X8

A BLOODY NEW CHAPTER

After decades of discord, the lawmakers of early modern England took drastic new measures to make sure that citizens stayed in line

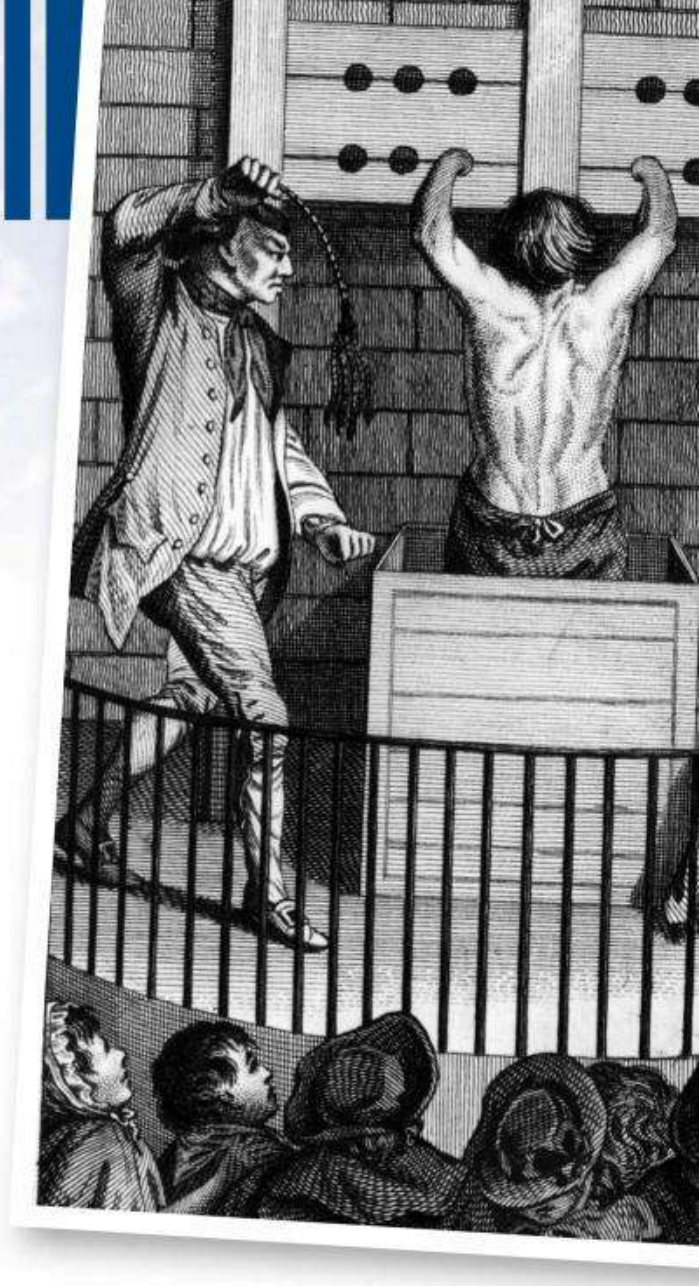
By the turn of the 19th century, the so-called 'Bloody Code' reigned supreme in England and Wales. Crimes as mundane as damaging a fishpond or cutting down a tree could earn you a one-way ticket to the gallows.

The harsh penal code (which was actually an accumulation of many different acts over several decades) emerged after a significant period of upheaval. From the start of the 17th century, treason had been in the air: 1605 was the year of the Gunpowder Plot, when Guy Fawkes and his conspirators hatched a plan to blow up King James VI and I's parliament. And the following decades saw the fall of the Stuarts during the Civil Wars; the rise of Oliver Cromwell and the Republic, which brought a wave of Puritan-inspired legislation; and the return of the monarchy in 1660.

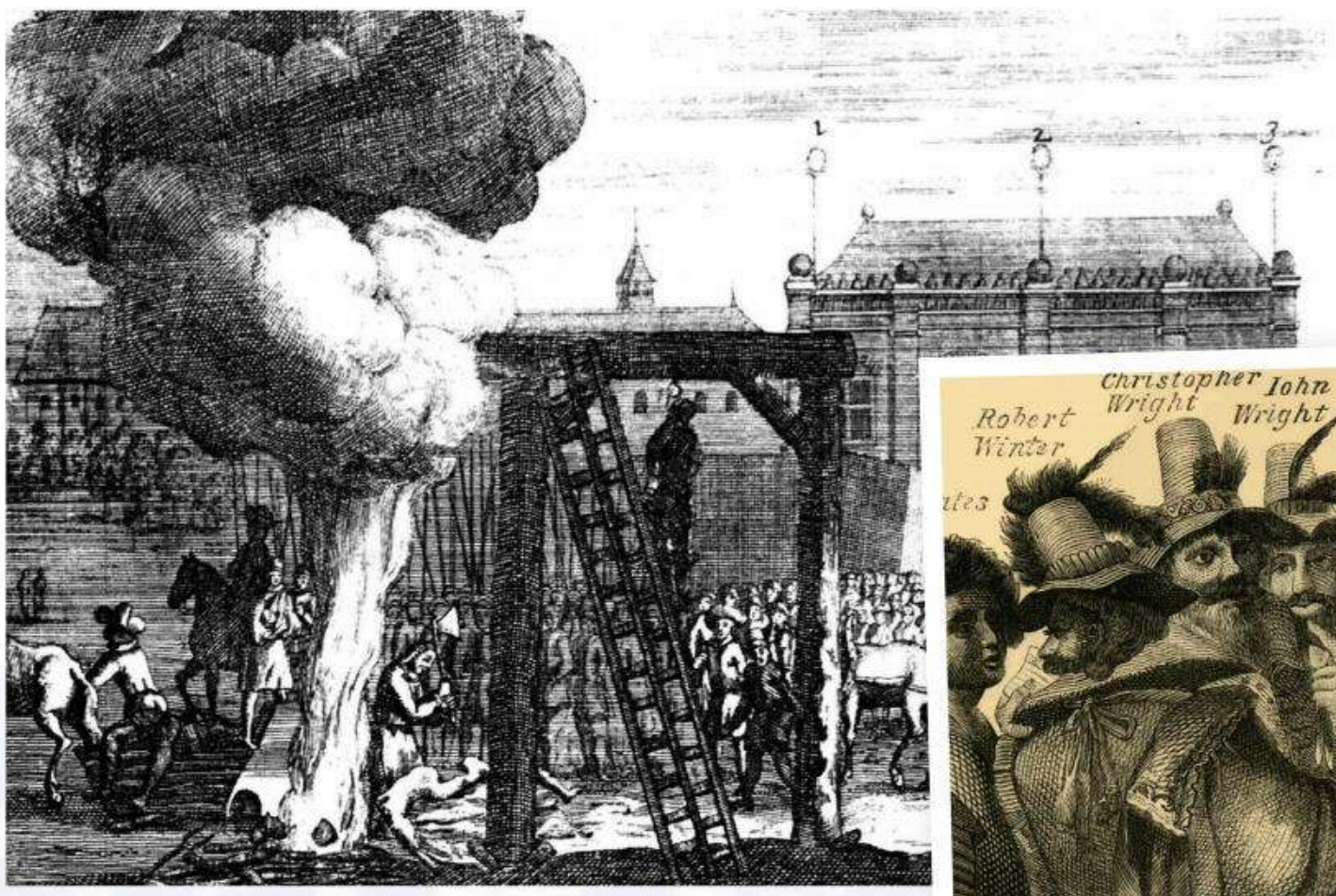
During this tumultuous period, any activity that threatened those in power was harshly punished: Guy Fawkes and his fellow plotters were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered (*see page 38*); Charles I was beheaded in 1649 for being a "tyrant, traitor, murderer and Public Enemy"; and his son, Charles II, sought gruesome retribution against those who had signed his father's death warrant – Oliver Cromwell's corpse was dug back up and hanged in chains.

HANG 'EM AND FLOG 'EM

But by the end of the 1600s, England was on a more even keel. The monarchy's power was no longer allowed to run rampant, and the government was controlled by eye-wateringly wealthy MPs who owned vast swathes of land. These men were also justices of the peace in their constituencies, responsible for maintaining order.



BELOW RIGHT: **The Gunpowder Plotters were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered – although Guy Fawkes jumped off the scaffold, breaking his neck**



BELOW LEFT: **The late parliamentarians Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton and John Bradshaw were posthumously 'executed' in 1661: their heads are shown here on pikes, labelled 1, 2 and 3 respectively**

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X2

Crucially, the MPs passed the country's laws, and they were determined to protect their own interests – particularly their property. As towns grew in size, they became convinced that local crime rates were much higher than they really were, and thus sought new measures to keep their estates safe from pillaging criminals.

The men were also unmoved by the plight of people who might steal a small amount of money or food to survive – petty theft was by far the most common crime of the early modern period, accounting for around three-quarters of felonies prosecuted. Instead, they viewed all criminals as sinful and consumed by greed, and refused to show them mercy.

It was these beliefs that led to the emergence of the aforementioned 'Bloody Code' – a set of laws that meant hundreds of offences would result in public executions. Previously, the number of crimes punishable by death

was relatively low – about 50 in England and Wales in 1688. However, by 1815, this number had ballooned to at least 200. Capital offences ranged from serious crimes, such as murder and arson, to misdeeds such as damaging a garden or stealing a rabbit. Even children as young as seven could be given a death sentence.

"Capital offences included misdeeds such as damaging a garden or stealing a rabbit"

It would be reasonable to assume that the advent of the Bloody Code caused executions to skyrocket, but in reality, the opposite happened. In the early 17th century, around 150 people per year were sentenced to death in London; a century later, just 20 were.

ABOVE: **A 1732 scene by William Hogarth shows women being forced to beat hemp in the notorious Bridewell house of correction**

ABOVE LEFT: **Corporal punishments such as public flogging remained popular in the 18th century**

So, did people simply stop committing crimes to avoid being hanged? It seems the answer isn't quite so straightforward. Although judges *could* sentence people to death under the Bloody Code for their infractions, in many cases they didn't either lessening the charge so it could no longer result in the death penalty, sentencing them to transportation (*see page 44*), or allowing the accused to enlist with the armed forces. Many juries were also unwilling to deliver guilty verdicts that would see the defendant handed the death penalty.

The Bloody Code wasn't the only way criminals could be punished, though. Vagrancy was still viewed as a crime at the start of the early modern period, and, during the 16th century, homeless people could be placed in a 'house of correction'. Unlike prisons, which were seen as holding areas at the time, houses of correction were meant to be places where inmates – by undertaking tasks such as spinning and weaving – could be taught a valuable lesson about the importance of hard work.

SHAME OLD STORY

Of course, the old corporal punishments continued, with flogging particularly popular. Shaming remained in vogue, too, with those found guilty of petty infringements of the law sentenced to a spell in the stocks or the pillory. And fines were still slapped on those who committed minor crimes, from drinking too much to indulging in gambling.

Yet with the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, life in Britain was about to undergo an astonishing transformation – and the old ways of punishment would need to evolve to keep up with the rapidly changing face of crime.

WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES

THREE EARLY MODERN PUNISHMENTS

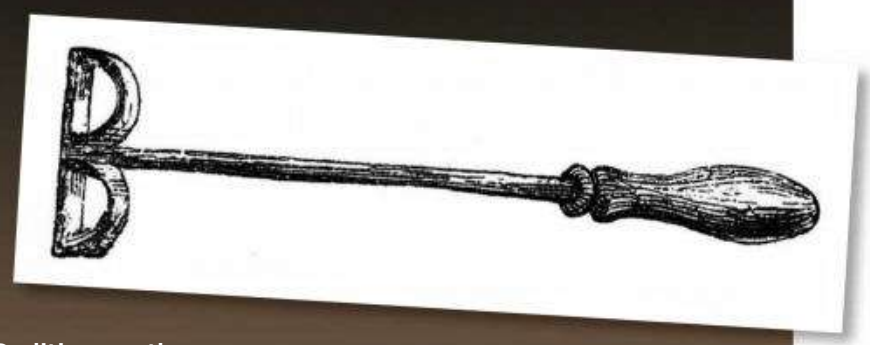
Public humiliation was par for the course when it came to disciplining people for their transgressions

THE DRUNKARD'S CLOAK

▼ Those who fell too far into their cups would be reprimanded by being forced to wear a truly bizarre costume: a large wooden barrel dubbed the 'drunkard's cloak'. With only their head and limbs poking out, the offender would then be made to walk through the streets accompanied by a band of drummers – ensuring that their ungainly and awkward waddle was watched by crowds of onlookers.

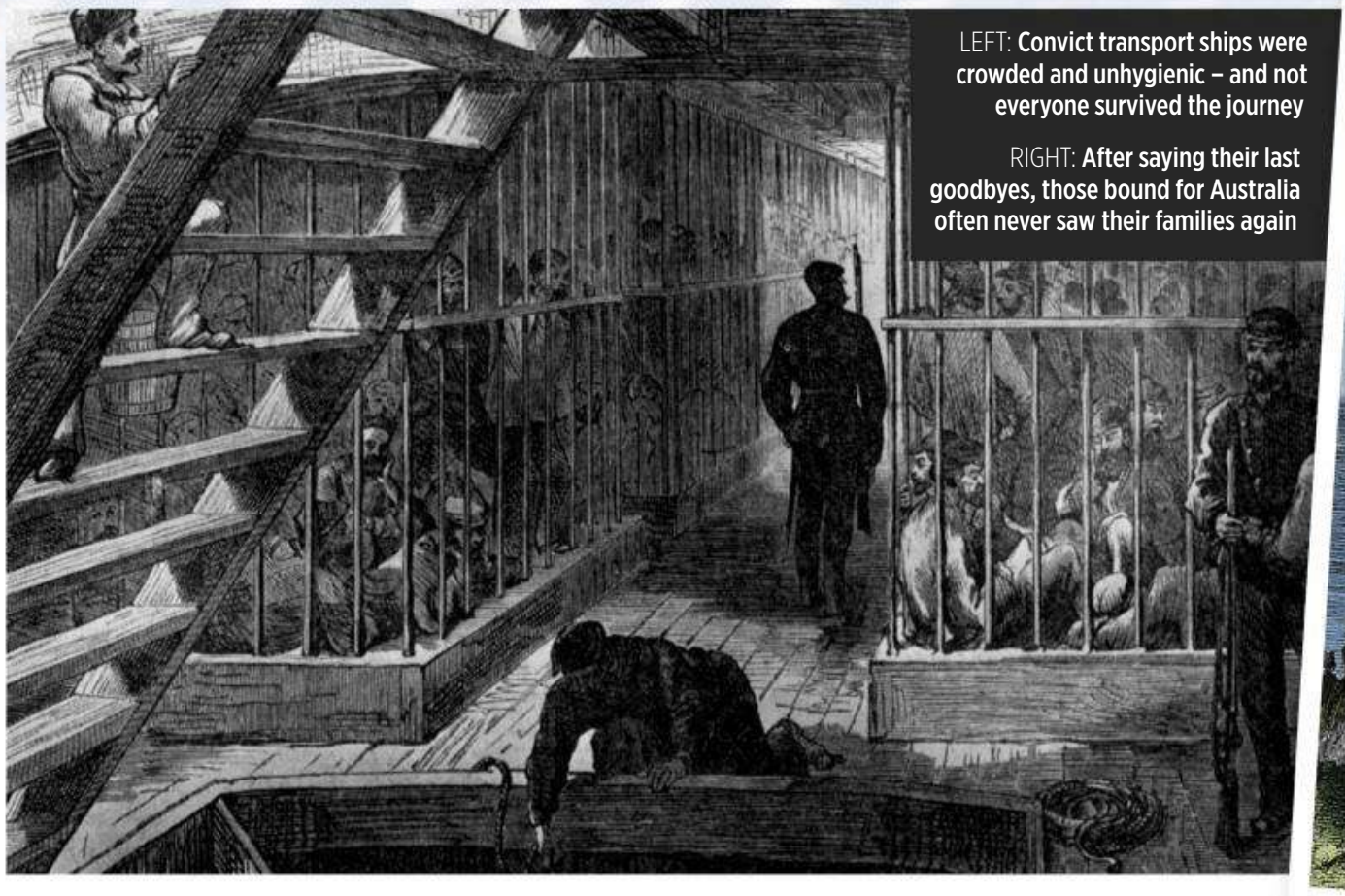
MUTILATION/BRANDING

▶ Thieves or blasphemers often had their faces branded – an incredibly painful punishment that left life-long scars, broadcasting their transgression to every person they met. Thieves would have the letter 'T' branded onto their cheeks; blasphemers would get the letter 'B'. Seditious authors or religious radicals would escape the red-hot poker, but their fate was equally unpleasant: they would have an ear lopped off, symbolising that they had turned from God to hear Satan instead.



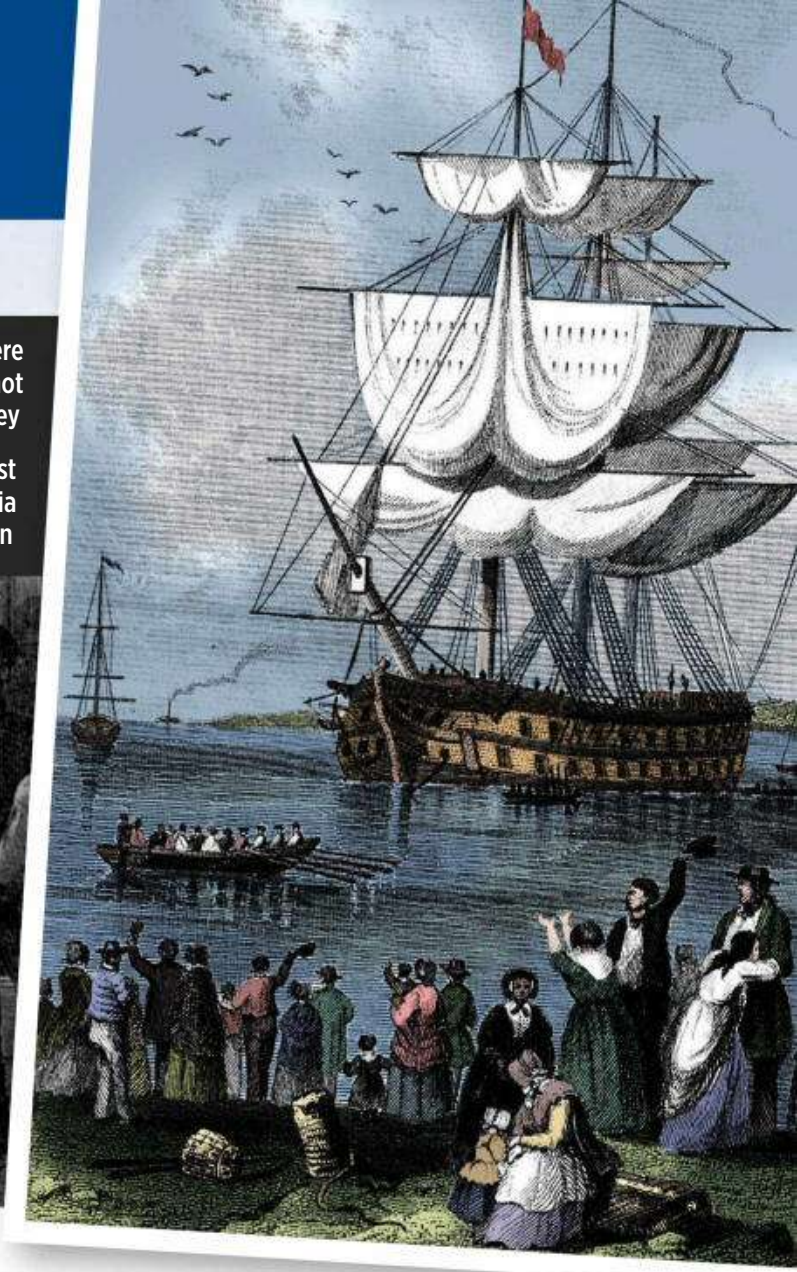
SCOLD'S BRIDLE

▶ If a person disturbed their neighbours' peace with loud quarrelling or gossip, they could be made to wear the scold's bridle. The device (which was overwhelmingly used on women) would be strapped around the person's head, with an iron tongue forced into their mouth. It was a punishment designed to humiliate: the 'offender' would be forced to go out in public, so everyone could see. Although they were technically illegal, scold's bridles were widely used in England and Scotland during the 16th and 17th centuries.



LEFT: **Convict transport ships were crowded and unhygienic – and not everyone survived the journey**

RIGHT: **After saying their last goodbyes, those bound for Australia often never saw their families again**



BANISHED TO A LAND DOWN UNDER

Rather than fill the prisons or issue the death penalty, judges chose to ship tens of thousands of convicts to Australia

On 13 May 1787, a fleet of 11 ships carrying around 1,400 men, women and children, including around 700 convicts, left Portsmouth Harbour to sail to the other side of the world. Thieves, protesters and petty criminals were crammed below deck, with the rolling of the waves and the wails of their companions the only sounds they would hear for the next eight months – the amount of time it would take the so-called First Fleet to reach the shores of Australia.

The voyage marked the start of Britain's use of penal colonies Down Under, but transportation as a form of criminal punishment had first emerged in the 17th century. At the time of the fleet's sailing, the Bloody Code was in full force and many crimes carried the death penalty (*see page 42*). Sentencing a person to exile in a foreign land was regarded by many judges as preferable to execution, and had the added bonus of making the criminal another country's problem.

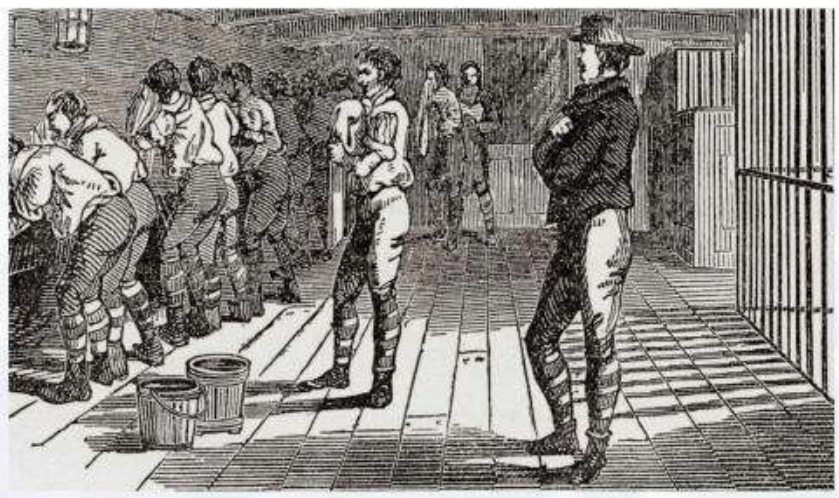
The 1717 Transportation Act made banishing people overseas even simpler, stating that anyone sentenced for a serious crime would spend 14 years in an overseas penal colony, and anyone guilty of lesser felonies, such as theft, would be given a seven-year exile – the majority of people transported fell into the latter category. Also transported were protesters, such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs (who were punished, in 1834, for essentially forming a trade union). Around 85 per cent of convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868 were men, although their ages ranged wildly, from boys as young as nine to men well over 80 years old.

LOSS OF THE AMERICAS

By 1775, more than 50,000 convicts had been transported to North America (excluding Canada) and the West Indies. The creation of settlements and the amount of work needed to turn them into thriving colonies made the New World a clear choice. Convicts were shipped mostly to Virginia or Maryland, or to islands of the West Indies, where many spent their sentences in back-breaking labour on the plantations. Those transported helped build the American colonies, although with the slave trade bringing millions of enslaved Africans to enforced work on the plantations too, the need for convict labour remained relatively small.

After 1776, when America declared its independence, it was clear that the

An illustration shows life inside the prison hulk used to hold the Tolpuddle Martyrs before they were transported in 1834



GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X4

country was closed for business as far as transportation was concerned. This presented a huge problem for Britain. People continued to pour through the judicial system and the prisons were full to bursting, but there was nowhere for those sentenced to transportation to go.

As a desperate stopgap, creaking ex warships were hastily thrown into service once more, having been repurposed as floating prisons in rivers all over Britain. Life on one of these 'hulks' was appalling: dangerously overcrowded, with diseases like cholera and typhoid rife. Inmates would be forced ashore for hard labour – as much as 10 hours a day in the summer months – and once back on board, would be clapped in irons and made to sleep on the bare floor. Death rates on the hulks were high; from 1776 to 1795, nearly a third of convicts held on the prison ships perished.

A proper fix was needed, and, in 1783, Australia was proposed as a destination. Four years later, the First Fleet carrying 736 convicts set sail under the command of Royal Navy Captain Arthur Phillip, and set up at Sydney Cove the first penal colony. A second – in Tasmania – followed in 1803, and a third came in Western Australia in 1850. In total, more than 160,000 people were transported to Australia. In 1833, the peak year of Australian convict transportation, there were some 7,000 new arrivals.

Once they had arrived, convicts were assigned work according to their skills, although everything involved physical labour. For six days a week, from sunrise to sunset, gangs of workers constructed roads and bridges, split apart rocks, or worked on farms helping free settlers.

THE PATH TO REDEMPTION

Phillip, who became the first governor of New South Wales, thought "honest sweat" would help reform convicts and put them on the path to redemption. Those who failed to follow the rules were treated harshly: flogging and solitary confinement were common tools, while chronic rule-breakers were packed off to the most isolated settlements. But for those who buckled down, Australia provided opportunities unavailable in Britain. For good behaviour, convicts could be rewarded with a ticket of leave, which allowed them privileges such as being able to seek work for themselves.

Once freed, many chose to remain in Australia. The cost of a ticket home was steep, while staying meant they could maybe even buy some land of their own. In the words of Reverend Richard Johnson from Sydney, former convicts were building a life "better than many farmers in England".

Despite the positive outcomes for many convicts, the tide was turning against transportation. The number of capital offences had gradually declined, and the prevailing attitude was that imprisonment was the superior form of punishment, following a swathe of reforms and the building of new prisons. Australians themselves also began to criticise Britain for using their home as a place to offload its "criminal class". Transportation to Australia ended in 1868, when Britain finally opted to keep its criminals on its own shores.

WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES

THE CASE OF: MINA JURY

CONVICTION:
1847: Theft

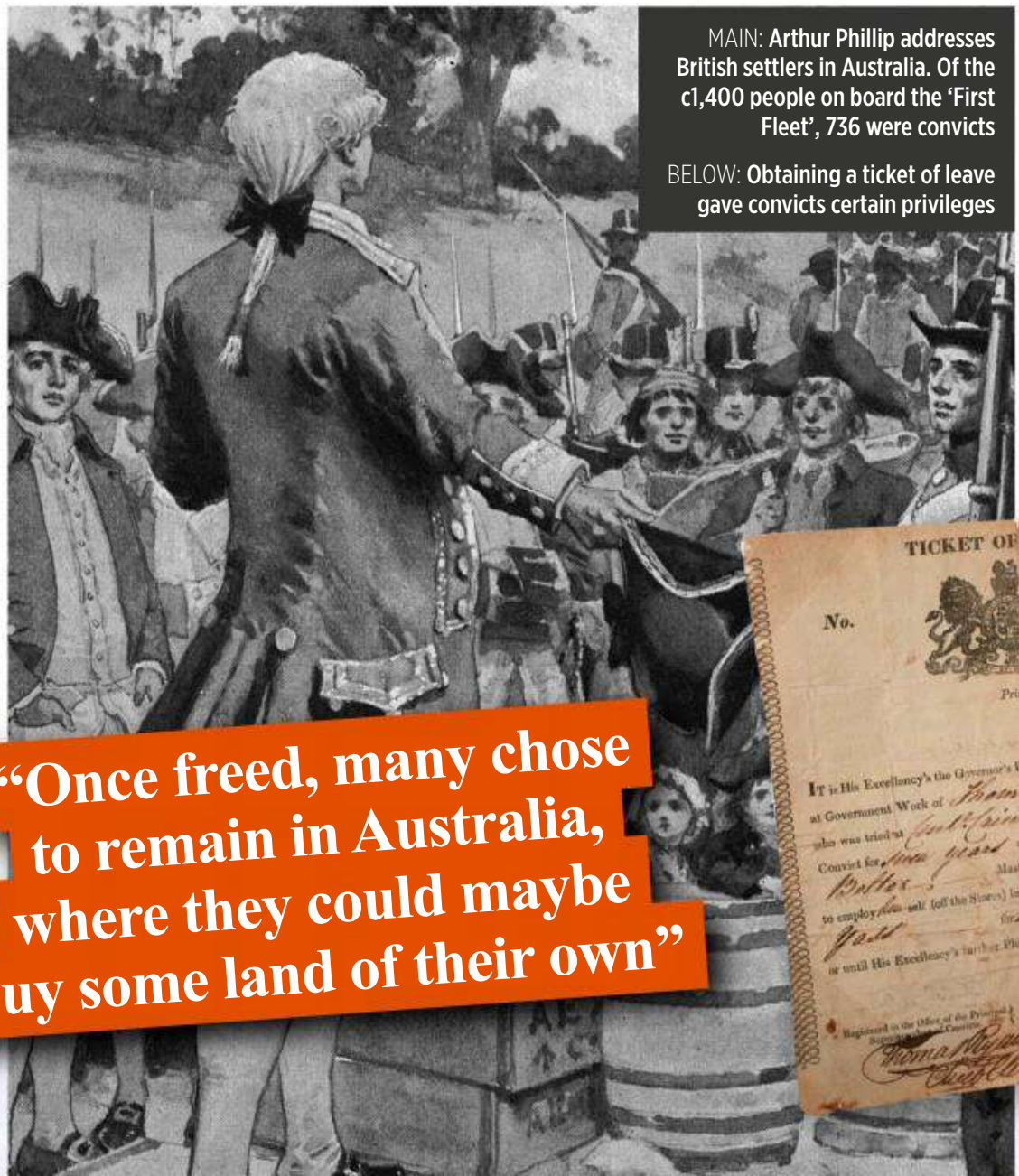
SENTENCE:
Transportation to Van Diemen's Land for seven years

Originally from Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Mina Jury (born c1828 as Euphemia McCauldfield) was dismissed from her position as a domestic servant at the age of 17 for stealing jewellery from her employer. Found guilty at trial in 1847, she was sentenced to be transported for seven years. On board the convict ship *John Calvin*, she arrived in Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) the following year.

Jury spent a short amount of time as a third-class convict – those undertaking a punishment handed down by magisterial sentences or by the Supreme Court – and was granted a ticket of leave in 1851. By then, she had married a free man named Francis Jury, a coxswain in the penal colony, and the pair would go on to have 11 surviving children. For a while, it seemed that Jury had a relatively comfortable life until Francis' death in 1867.

The robbery for which she had been convicted and transported remained Jury's only offence for nearly 20 years, but in 1873 she was summoned back to England to testify in a high profile court case. It was then that she returned to a life of crime. Over the next 15 years, she was in and out of prison, including seven years of penal servitude, which would have seen her experience time in the 'separate and silent system', where prisoners were kept isolated from each other (*see page 48*). Wanted advertisements for Jury, who was accused of "stealing money and bedclothes", appear until the end of 1890, but it is unknown whether she was ever apprehended. She disappears from records thereafter.

**Information courtesy of Dr Lucy Williams via the Digital Panopticon website, a database of records relating to the lives of 90,000 convicts from the Old Bailey. Visit digitalpanopticon.org*



MAIN: Arthur Phillip addresses British settlers in Australia. Of the c1,400 people on board the 'First Fleet', 736 were convicts

BELOW: Obtaining a ticket of leave gave convicts certain privileges

TICKET OF LEAVE.

No. 40/2049

Principal Superintendent of Convicts Office,
Sydney, New South Wales,
1840

It is His Excellency's the Governor's Pleasure to Dispense with the Attendance at Government Work of Thomas Barker who was tried at Lincoln Quarter Sessions convicted per Ship Asia Convict for seven years Master, in the Year 1836 and to permit him to employ himself (off the Stores) in any lawful occupation within the District of Port Phillip for his own advantage during good behaviour; or until His Excellency's further Pleasure shall be made known.

By His Excellency's Command.

Registered in the Office of the Principal Superintendent of Convicts

Thomas Murray Chief Clerk

"Once freed, many chose to remain in Australia, where they could maybe buy some land of their own"

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST HEISTS

We reveal the eye-watering statistics behind the most audacious art thefts and bank raids in recent British history

ART ON THE RUN

1966

Rembrandt's 1632 painting *Jacob de Gheyn III* (left) was first stolen in 1966 from the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London by thieves who also removed works by Peter Paul Rubens, Gerard Dou and Adam Elsheimer, along with two other Rembrandts. The artwork was recovered but would be stolen three more times: in 1973, 1981 and 1983.

2003

In what appears to have been a stunt designed to highlight the gallery's security issues, three paintings – Van Gogh's *Fortifications of Paris with Houses* (*right*), Picasso's *Poverty* and Gauguin's *Tahitian Landscape* – then worth a collective £4m were stolen from the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester. The works were found hours later, rolled up in a cardboard tube in a nearby disused public lavatory – later dubbed 'the Loovre'.

2005

Henry Moore's two-tonne sculpture *Reclining Figure* was stolen from the artist's foundation in Hertfordshire in 2005. In 2009, after conducting enquires at a local scrapyard, police concluded that the work had been cut up and melted down – the bronze selling for around £1,500, despite the artwork having been worth around £3m.

Curator David Mitchinson stands at the site where Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure* was stolen in 2005

MONEY GRABBING

Some criminals will stop at nothing to get their hands on the loot. Here are the key numbers behind 10 famous UK heists...

(Bars represent the approximate present-day value of the theft according to the Bank of England's inflation calculator, with the original amounts shown in brackets)

8 AUGUST 1963

GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, Ledburn, Buckinghamshire

HOW MUCH: **£39.7M** (£2.6M) IN CASH

CONVICTIONS: 12

2 APRIL 1983

SECURITY EXPRESS, Shoreditch, London

HOW MUCH: **£16.3M** (£6M) IN CASH

CONVICTIONS: 4

26 NOVEMBER 1983

BRINK'S-MAT ROBBERY, Heathrow, London

HOW MUCH: **£70.7M** (£26M) IN GOLD BULLION, DIAMONDS AND CASH

CONVICTIONS: 3

12 JULY 1987

KNIGHTSBRIDGE SAFE DEPOSIT CENTRE, London

HOW MUCH: **£140M** (£60M) IN SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX ITEMS

CONVICTIONS: 4

2 MAY 1990
CITY BONDS ROBBERY, London

HOW MUCH: **£583.1M (£292M)** IN TREASURY BILLS AND CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT

CONVICTIONS: **2**

3 JULY 1995
MIDLAND BANK CLEARING CENTRE, Salford, Greater Manchester

HOW MUCH: **£11M (£6.6M)** IN CASH

CONVICTIONS: **2** (THESE WERE LATER QUASHED)

20 DECEMBER 2004
NORTHERN BANK, Belfast

HOW MUCH: **£38.6M (£26.5M)** IN CASH

CONVICTIONS: **1**

21 FEBRUARY 2006
SECURITAS DEPOT, Tonbridge, Kent

HOW MUCH: **£74M (£53M)** IN CASH

CONVICTIONS: **8** (INCLUDING 4 LIFE SENTENCES)

6 AUGUST 2009
GRAFF DIAMONDS, London

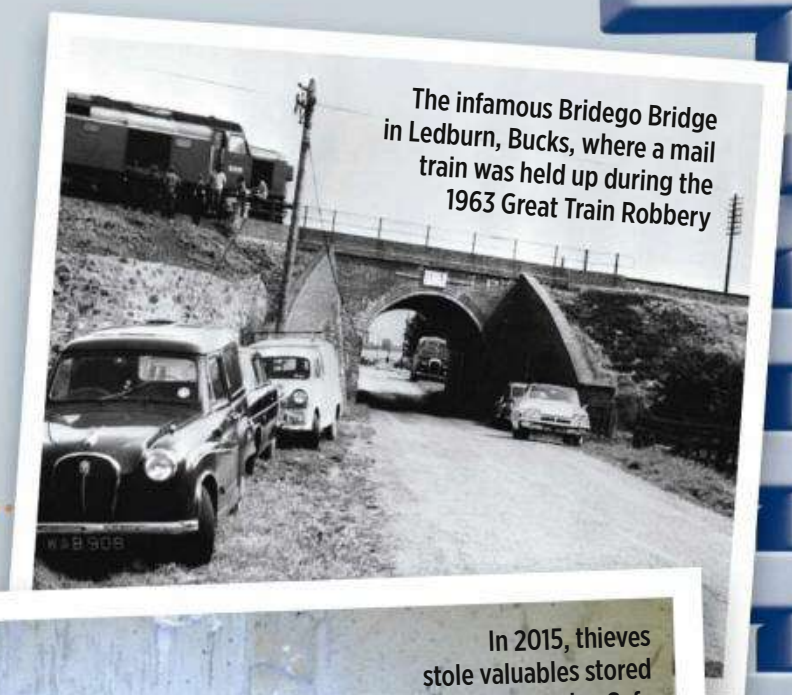
HOW MUCH: **NEARLY £51.5M (£40M)** IN JEWELLERY AND WATCHES

CONVICTIONS: **5**

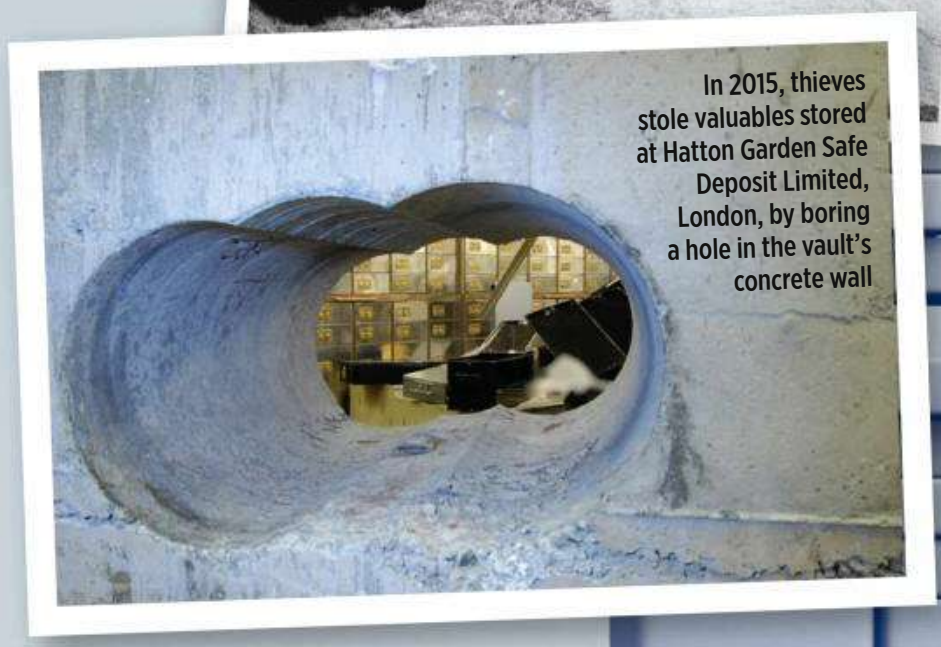
2 APRIL 2015
HATTON GARDEN, London

HOW MUCH: **£15.6M (£14M)** IN SAFE DEPOSIT CONTENTS

CONVICTIONS: **7**



The infamous Bridego Bridge in Ledburn, Bucks, where a mail train was held up during the 1963 Great Train Robbery



In 2015, thieves stole valuables stored at Hatton Garden Safe Deposit Limited, London, by boring a hole in the vault's concrete wall

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X3

THE VICTORIAN FORM OF JUSTICE

Fears of a criminal class in industrial city slums inspired more prisons and the creation of the first police forces

DID YOU KNOW?

NEWGATE NUMBERS

Between 1783 (when London's site of execution was moved from the historic gallows at Tyburn) and 1902, a total of 1,169 people were put to death at Newgate Prison or nearby, both publicly and privately. Of those, all but 49 were men.

Newgate Prison had rarely seen anything quite like it. On 6 July 1840, a crowd of 40,000 people among them aristocrats, politicians and world famous novelists descended on one of London's oldest jails to savour the grisliest of spectacles: a convict being put to death.

The man condemned to hang was a 23 year old Swiss valet named François Benjamin Courvoisier, and his trial for cutting his employer Lord William Russell's throat in his fashionable Mayfair residence had electrified the capital for weeks. A rapt public had followed the case's every twist and turn, from Courvoisier's protestations of innocence to the game-changing revelation that he had deposited silverware stolen from Russell's household to a Madame Piolaine. By the time Courvoisier was led to the scaffold to, as one report put it, a cacophony of "hootings, hissings, yells and whistling", his was one of the best-known names in London.

That so many people would turn out to watch Courvoisier be put to death speaks to the Victorians' fascination with crime; a fascination that was fired by ghoulish voyeurism, but also by fear. For in the popular imagination, there were criminals lurking in every shadow waiting for an opportunity to pick your pocket or cut your throat.

Fear of crime is as old as the hills. Yet the merest of glances at 19th century novels and newspapers – not

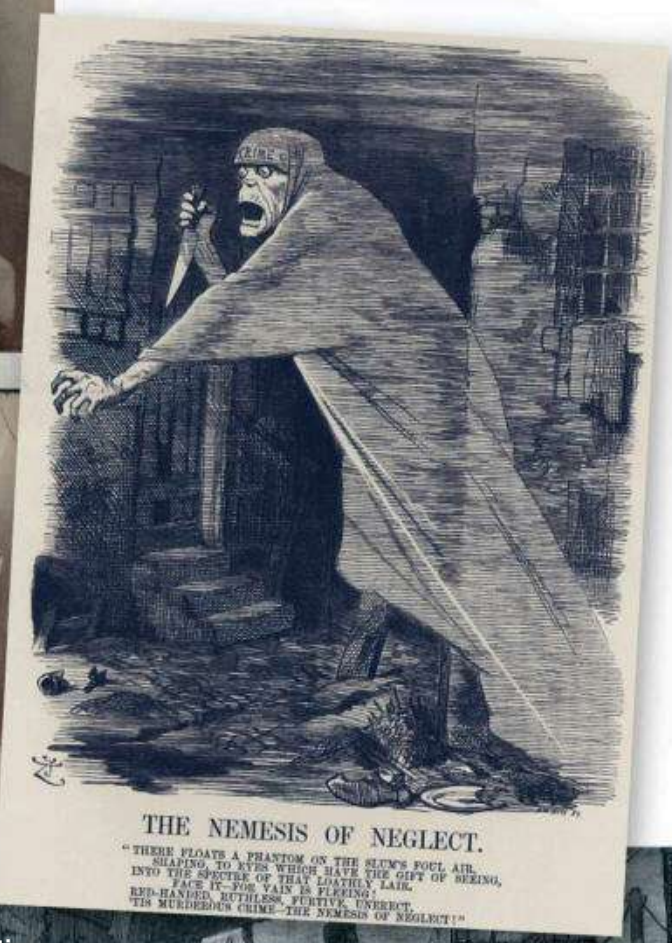
ABOVE: **Executions at Newgate Prison, depicted here in the late 18th century, were spectacles designed to act as both a deterrent and a morbid form of entertainment**

RIGHT: **Stories and illustrations in the press played on the fear that London slums were being turned into criminal underworlds**

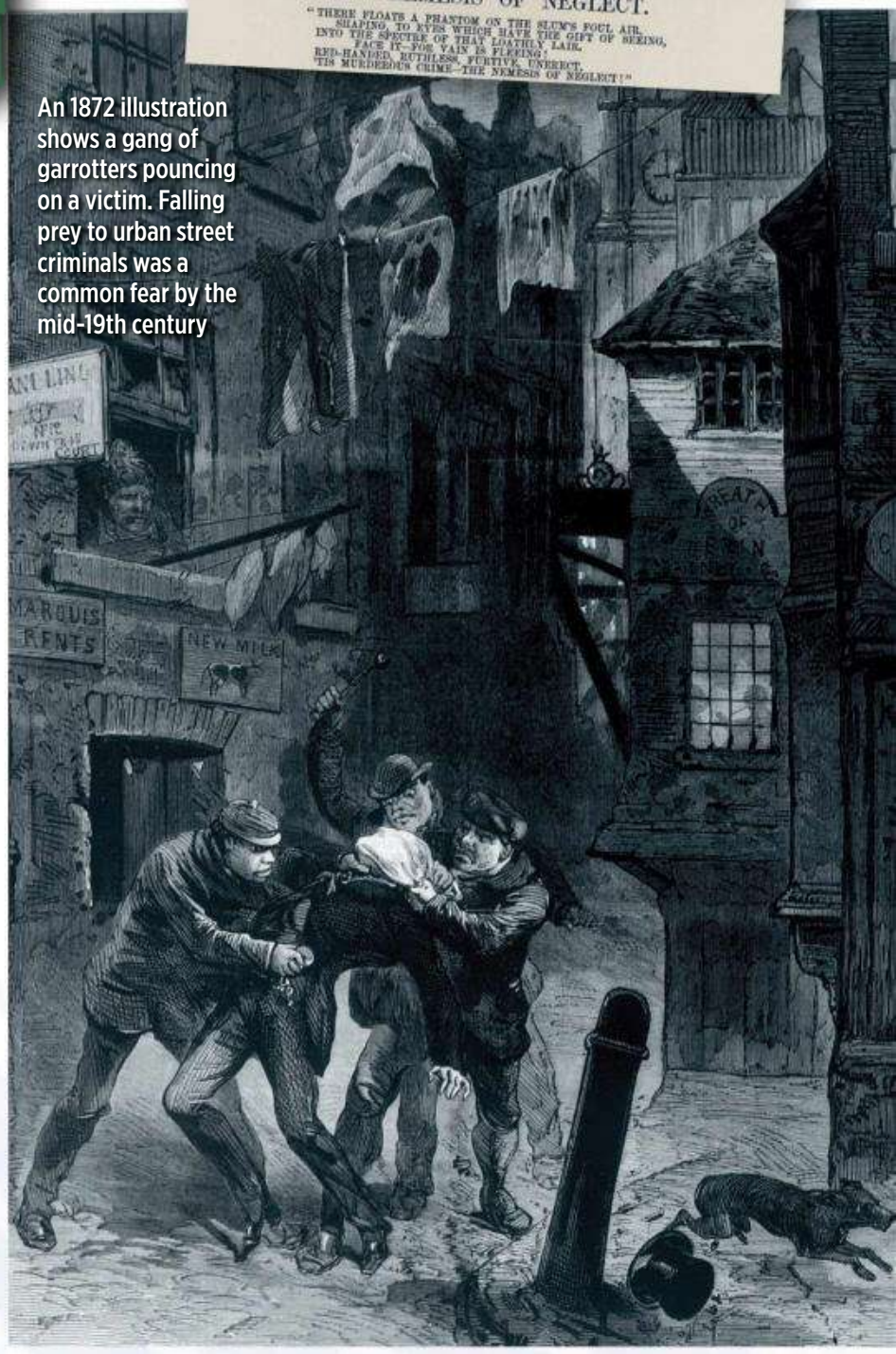
GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3

LEFT: **Mugshots from a criminal register held at Wormwood Scrubs prison. The inmates' side profiles were captured with the aid of a mirror**

BELOW: **A *Punch* cartoon shows the spectre of 'crime' haunting the streets – in this case, referring to the Whitechapel murders of 1888**


THE NEMESIS OF NEGLECT.
"THERE FLOATS A PHANTOM ON THE SLUM'S FOUL AIR,
SHAPING, TO EYES WHICH HAVE THE GIFT OF SEEING,
INTO THE SPECTRE OF THAT LOATHLY LAIR.
FACE IT—FOR VAIN IS FLEEING!
RED-HANDED, RUTHLESS, FURTIVE, UNERECT,
'TIS MURDEROUS CRIME—THE NEMESIS OF NEGLECT!"

"The garrotting panic of 1862 is a prime example of the press turning an isolated crime into nationwide hysteria"



An 1872 illustration shows a gang of garrotters pouncing on a victim. Falling prey to urban street criminals was a common fear by the mid-19th century

to mention the legislation that passed through parliament – strongly suggest that it loomed larger than ever before. There are a number of reasons for that. One was the growing popularity of the printed press. Scores of newspapers and magazines – from *Punch* to *The Morning Chronicle* to the *Bristol Mercury* – were engaged in a war to boost circulation, and what better weapon than lurid tales of humanity's foulest deeds to chill their readership's blood?

The garrotting panic of 1862 is a prime example of the press latching on to a crime and turning it into nationwide hysteria. On 17 July, Hugh Pilkington, the Liberal MP for Blackburn, was garrotted and robbed while walking home from a late sitting of the House of Commons (but managed to survive). It was an isolated incident, but that didn't stop many Londoners – egged on by the newspapers – from concluding that they were now at the mercy of violent thieves. *The Times* intoned that garrotting was "unBritish", while *Punch* gleefully produced cartoons showing how to protect oneself from garrotters by wearing collars studded with huge spikes.

Another reason for the surging fear of crime was Britain's rapid urbanisation. The Industrial Revolution had seen thousands of people move from the countryside to the city's rapidly expanding cities. That often meant living cheek by jowl with complete strangers. More importantly, it resulted in the rise of urban slums dominated, in the eyes of many, by inveterate criminals.

DANGEROUS UNDERWORLD

By the middle of the 19th century, the concept of a 'criminal class' – an incorrigible social group consisting of natural born felons – had implanted itself in Victorian minds. Soon, journalists and social reformers such as Henry Mayhew and Charles Dickens were sending back dispatches from this dangerous underworld. In one such expedition into St Giles, London, in 1851, Dickens wrote: "We stoop low, and creep down a precipitous flight of steps into a dark close cellar… The cellar is full of company, chiefly very young men in various conditions of dirt and raggedness. Welcome to Rats' Castle, gentlemen, and to this company of noted thieves!"

While many of these reports may have been well – intentioned in a bid to highlight the conditions under which the poorest in London lived, they all ▶

GETTING INTO UNIFORM

Glasgow, not London, was the birthplace of Britain's first professional police force

If the authorities in Victorian Britain were to win the war on crime, then prisons alone would not suffice. To truly take the fight to pickpockets, conmen and murderers, law enforcers were needed on the streets, and it was that aim that led to the rise of Britain's first professional police forces.

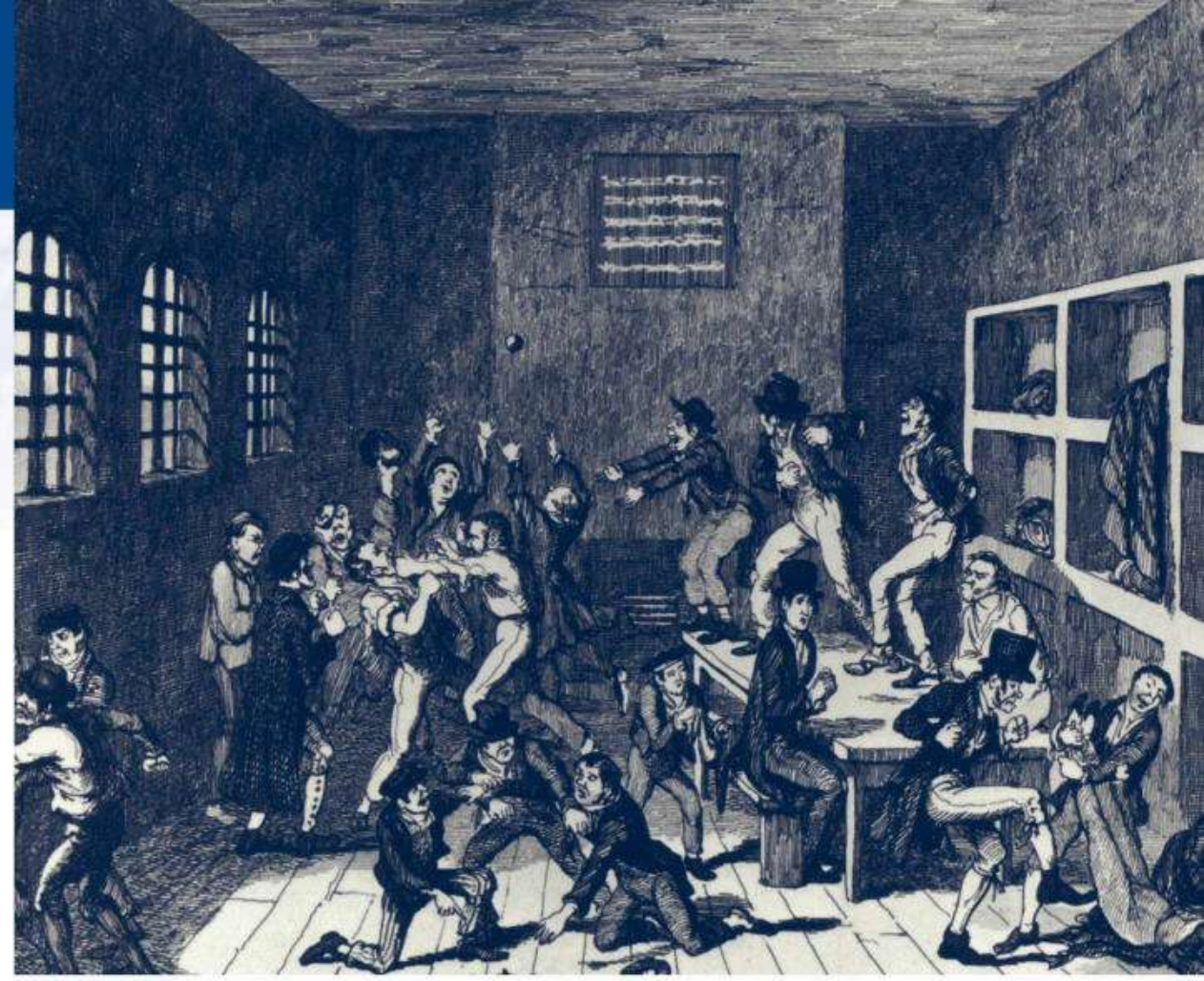
Law enforcement had existed long before the 19th century, of course: individual parishes had charged constables – in theory an amateur role performed by men who could read and write and had a working knowledge of the law – to keep local miscreants in line. But it was becoming increasingly obvious that these one-man crimefighting teams were outdated. The rapid growth of Britain's cities, with their sprawling slums, supercharged fears of crime among 'respectable' Victorians. The time had come to meet the challenge with uniformed, professional officers administered, recruited and paid for by local authorities.

The Metropolitan Police has long been Britain's largest and most high-profile force. But for all the fanfare that accompanied its creation by Home Secretary Robert Peel in 1829, it wasn't the first unarmed, uniformed unit. That arrived 29 years earlier and 400 miles north, in Glasgow. This was largely down to the endeavours of one man: John Stenhouse, who was appointed master of police on 29 September 1800. He set about organising and recruiting the force, appointing nine police officers (including three sergeants), and dividing them into sections. It was a new chapter in policing history.

Glasgow's police force had to grow rapidly – both in size and sophistication – to meet the demands of enforcing law and order in one of Britain's great metropolises. In 1861, its officers started communicating via electric telegraph; in 1862, they used photography for the first time to help solve a murder; and by 1899, they were employing the new fingerprint system to convict criminals.

A year later, when the Glasgow force celebrated its centenary, it numbered 1,355 officers and men. The days of constables acting as eyes and ears of local justice systems were now a distant memory.

Glasgow police officers are depicted uncovering a hidden brothel



A 19th-century depiction of the Wood Street Compter – a London prison that closed in 1791. Victorian prison reformers sought to replace the chaos of earlier prison systems with 'silence and separation'

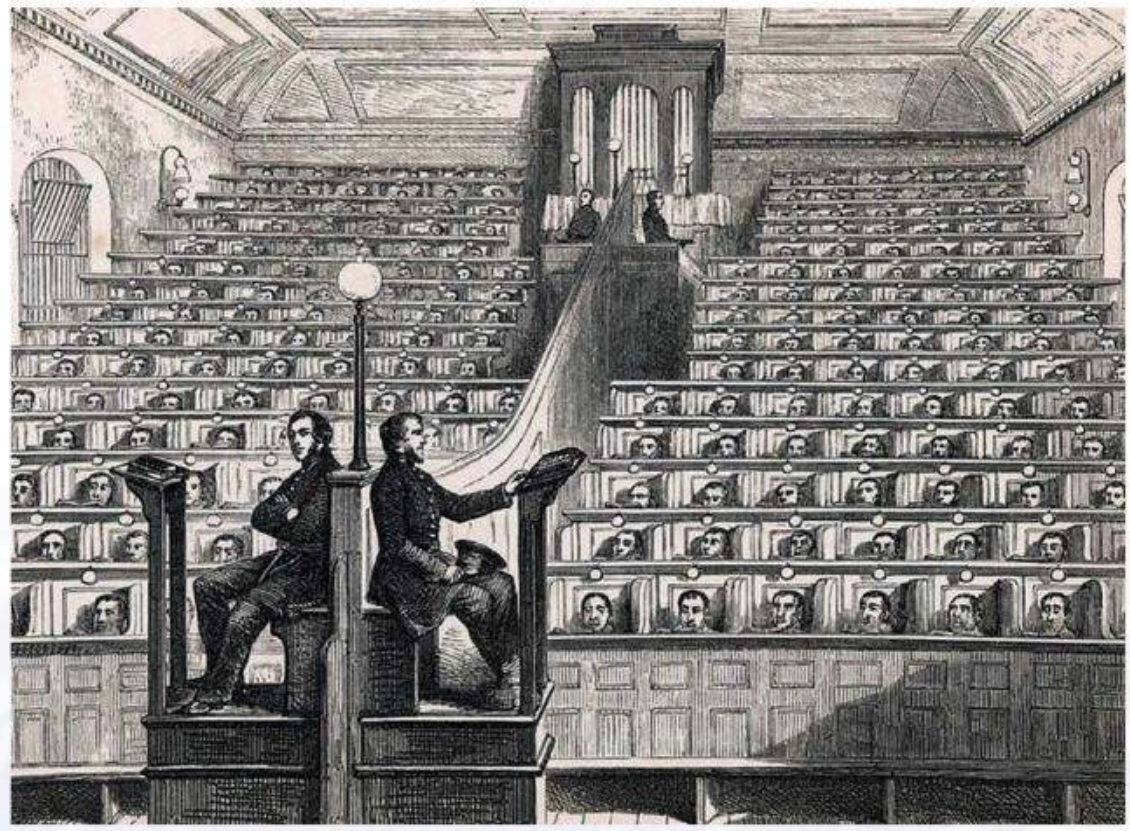
fed into the narrative that rampant criminality was on your doorstep, and if you didn't act fast, you would become a victim.

So what to do? What should be done to deter the denizens of Rats' Castle from their lives of crime, and what should happen to them if caught? The first half of the 19th century saw a change in the way that criminals were sanctioned by the justice system: fewer were subjected to physical punishments, such as branding or whipping; more were locked up in prison. But there was a problem with this policy and that was revealed by an 1836 report into the state of Newgate Prison.

Here, the inspectors found shocking levels of criminality. Newgate was, they reported, a hotbed of "riot, debauchery and gaming", with its inmates given access to gin shops and prostitutes. If some people hoped that a spell in prison might reform and rehabilitate London's criminal fraternity, it was, in fact, doing quite the opposite.

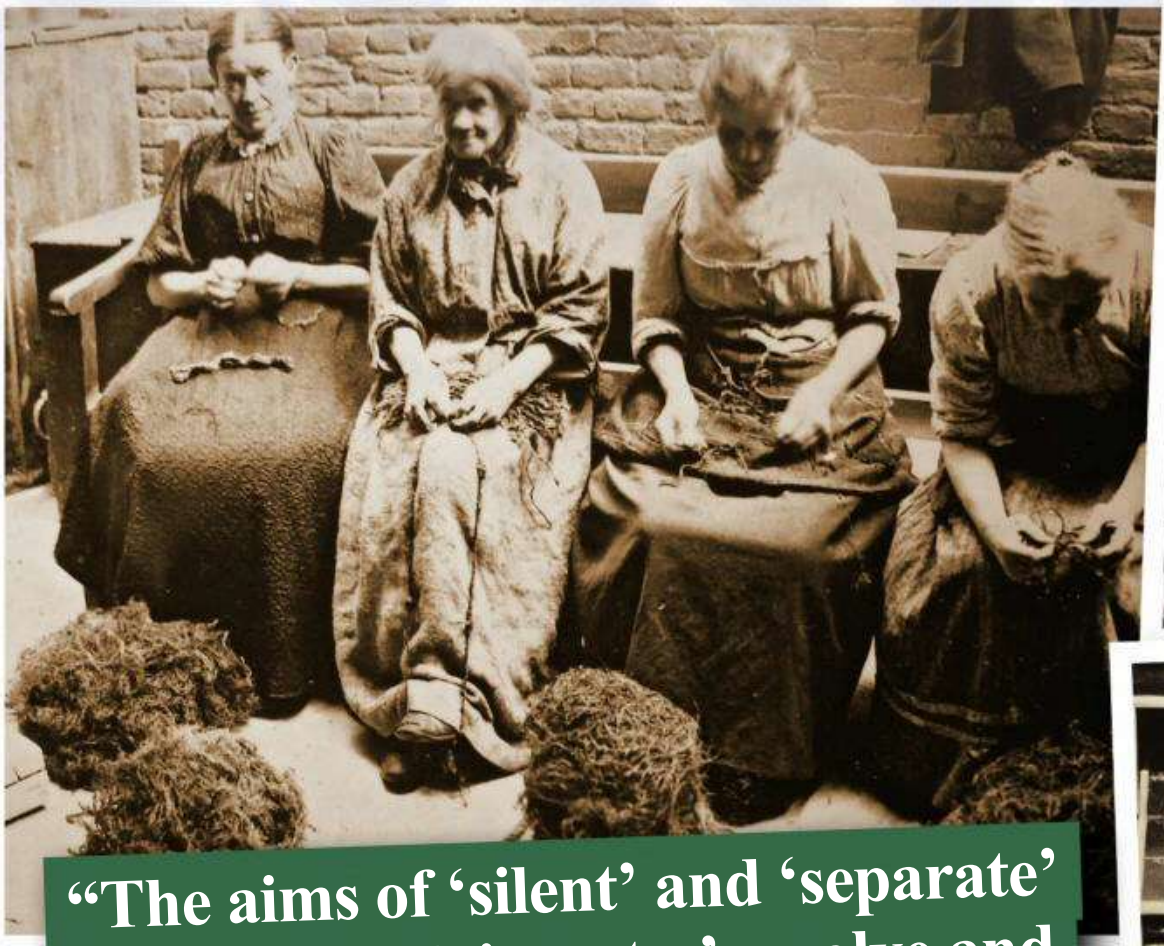
SILENT AND SEPARATE

In reality, most people who went up in front of the courts in the 19th century weren't hardened members of a dark, criminal underworld. They were instead more likely to be debtors, such as Charles Dickens' father, who, in the 1820s, landed himself in Marshalsea Prison on the south bank of the Thames due to the money he owed. Or they were the perpetrators of opportunistic acts of petty theft, such as 18 year old Mary Bailey: in 1840, with a prior conviction working



An illustration of a meeting at the Pentonville Prison chapel shows the 'separate' system in full force

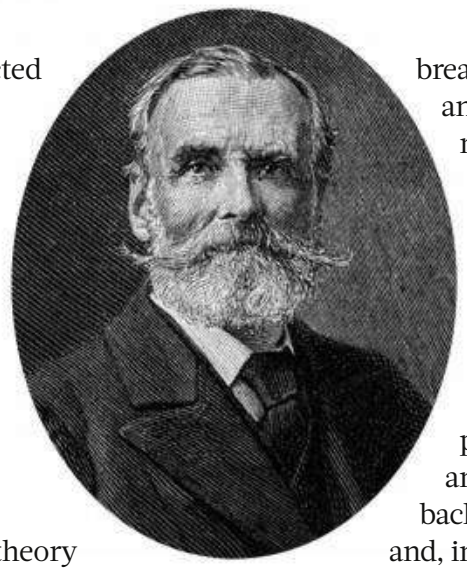
GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X5



"The aims of 'silent' and 'separate' were to break inmates' resolve and promote their moral regeneration"

against her, she was indicted for pinching a woman's purse in a butcher's shop and sentenced to 10 years' transportation (*see page 44 for more*).

Criminals like this earned little sympathy from prison reformers. With army man Sir Edmund Du Cane leading the charge, they would show an almost fanatical devotion to the theory that in order for imprisonment to be most effective it should be punitive and painful. Enter two radical new systems of incarceration: 'silence' and 'separation'.



Sir Edmund Du Cane led major prison reforms, although few were of any benefit to the prisoners themselves

These did exactly what they said on the tin. In silent system prisons, the inmates were forced to live in complete silence, often on pain of whipping and having to wear a mask when out of their cells; while separation saw them living in utter solitude 24 hours a day. The separation system prisons, by definition, required more space and led to the construction of new, model prisons, such as Pentonville, which featured heated cells with running water and its own chapel.

Although the silence and separation systems may have been different in many ways, they shared the same aims: to break inmates' resolve and promote their moral regeneration via contemplation, Bible reading and, above all, hard labour. Work was the absolute cornerstone of Sir Edmund Du Cane's vision of an ideal prison. But this wasn't any old work: it was back breaking, painful and, in many cases, utterly unproductive.

So, by the middle of the 19th century, prisoners up and down the country were being put to stone breaking and oakum picking (teasing apart the fibres of old ship rigging). Though tough and incredibly repetitive, these two activities at least had an end product.

CRANKING UP THE BACKLASH

The same can't be said of the use of the crank machine and treadwheel, the primary purpose of which was simply to exhaust the prisoners. The former saw them turn a hand crank more than 10,000 times a day, while the latter required climbing more than 8,000 feet a day (the equivalent of scaling London's Shard around eight times). Performing these tasks on a hearty diet would have been hard enough. Unfortunately, many Victorian prisoners lived on near starvation rations dishes of oatmeal gruel and the much hated 'stir about', a thin, unappetising porridge with added fat. Little wonder, then, that stories emerged of prisoners attempting to eat candles and books.

ABOVE: **Three inmates at Pentonville Prison are seen sharpening their tools in preparation for a long day at work**

TOP LEFT: **Oakum-picking, which involved untangling sections of old rope, was another laborious task used to keep prisoners busy and out of mischief**

TOP RIGHT: **Some inmates would be forced to climb on a treadwheel all day – a punishment that often served no useful purpose other than to exhaust the user**

By the end of the century, accounts of the horrors seen in British prisons were leading to a backlash. As early as 1840, Dickens was arguing for a more progressive approach, and in March 1846, he wrote a letter to the editors of *The Daily News* setting out his arguments for the "total abolition of the punishment of death, as a general principle, for the advantage of society, [and] for the prevention of crime". His critique of the justice system in *David Copperfield* supercharged calls for the demise of the separate system.

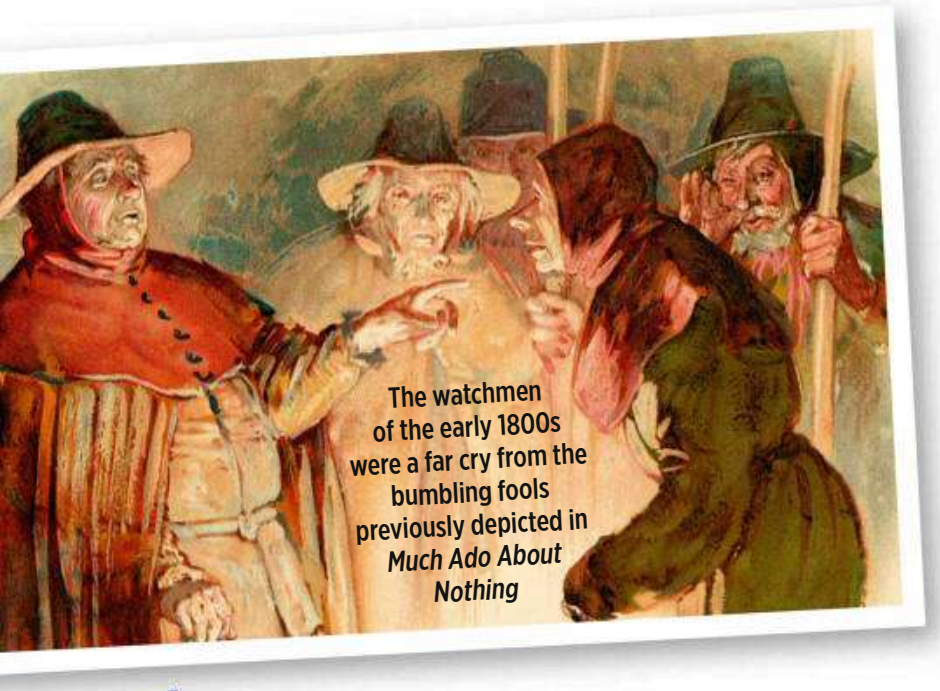
By the time the Gladstone Committee published a report into prisons in 1895, the scene was set for a new, more liberal penal policy. The report recommended more specialist prisons for different types of offenders and non custodial options for those convicted of crime. In other words, after decades of the penal system inflicting pain and misery, it would set out to rehabilitate prisoners, not just make them suffer.

WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN

6 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT

THE GREAT BRITISH 'BOBBY'

We explore a selection of surprising facts about the history of British policing – from Robert Peel to the present day



The watchmen of the early 1800s were a far cry from the bumbling fools previously depicted in *Much Ado About Nothing*

1 PROFESSIONAL POLICE INSTITUTIONS EXISTED BEFORE THE VICTORIANS

The date for the beginning of the police in Britain is often given as 1829, when the Metropolitan Police first took to London's streets. But the Scots and Northern Irish can dispute this, pointing to their earlier institutions: the City of Glasgow Police was formally recognised in 1800, while the Irish Constabulary (later superseded in Northern Ireland by the Royal Ulster Constabulary) was founded in 1822.

And, indeed, many other issues about police institutions are also open to debate. Firstly, at least as far as England is concerned, the Metropolitan Police did not replace men like Dogberry and Verges, the comic characters from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* responsible for a group of bumbling watchmen. Nor did they replace doddery old constables who could barely lift their lanterns. Police institutions around the country were already becoming increasingly professional before 1829, and especially during the 18th century. Evidence from the Old Bailey, for example, reveals the presence of a number of courageous watchmen and constables; these were typically former soldiers, under the age of 40, who knew the laws of the land. In some parishes, these watchmen wore numbers painted on the back of their overcoats so that they were identifiable.

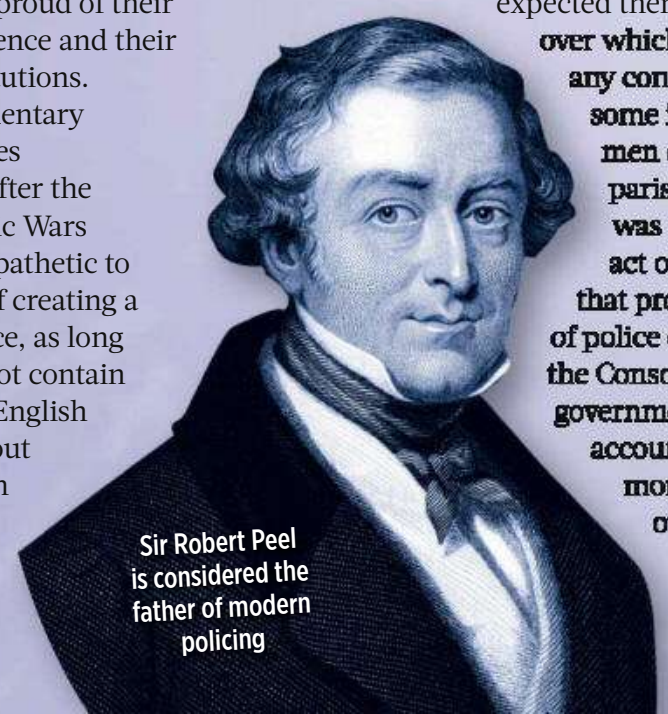
2 THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A METROPOLITAN POLICE FAILED

Traditionally, the assumption has been that the Metropolitan Police was established because of an increase in disorder and crime. This is, however, extremely difficult to prove.

What we do know is that there had been an earlier attempt to establish a professional police body. In June 1780, London suffered more than a week's rioting when the Protestant Association, principally directed by politician Lord George Gordon, began protesting about a minor easing of the then laws against Catholics. The suppression of the riots later known as the Gordon Riots necessitated the use of soldiers, and shortly afterwards there was a failed attempt to establish a Metropolitan Police. One reason for the failure of the attempt was the hostility of the Lord Mayor, Sir Watkin Lewes, and the City of London Corporation, who were both intensely proud of their independence and their own institutions.

Parliamentary committees meeting after the Napoleonic Wars were sympathetic to the idea of creating a police force, as long as it did not contain what the English feared about the French police: political ties and militarisation. It wasn't until Sir Robert Peel became home secretary in 1822 that any real change took place. In 1829, Peel set up the first disciplined police service for the Greater London area through the Metropolitan Police Act. One reason was to establish some sort of uniformity in how crime was dealt with across London although the powerful square mile of the City of London was allowed to go its own way, and it still has its own force and commissioner today.

Not everyone was happy with the new system. Before 1829, the London parishes had differing numbers of constables and watchmen; generally, the richer the parish, the greater number of men and the better their pay. These men belonged to their locality, and when the Metropolitan Force was founded, there was considerable annoyance among rate payers that the government expected them to pay for a force **over which they no longer had any control, and which, in some instances, put fewer men on the streets of their parish. This dissatisfaction was partly settled by an act of parliament in 1833 that provided for a quarter of police costs to come out of the Consolidated Fund (the government's general bank account, which held its money from taxes and other revenue at the Bank of England).**



Sir Robert Peel is considered the father of modern policing

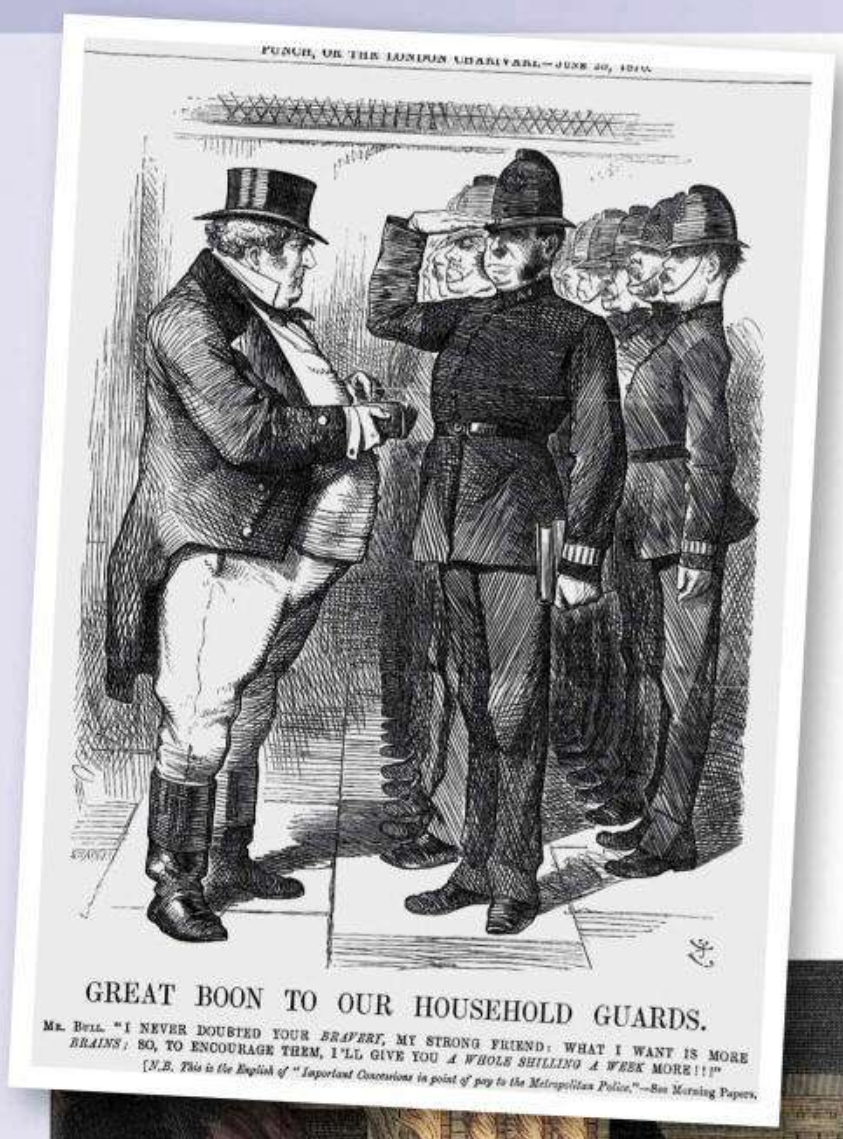
GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X2

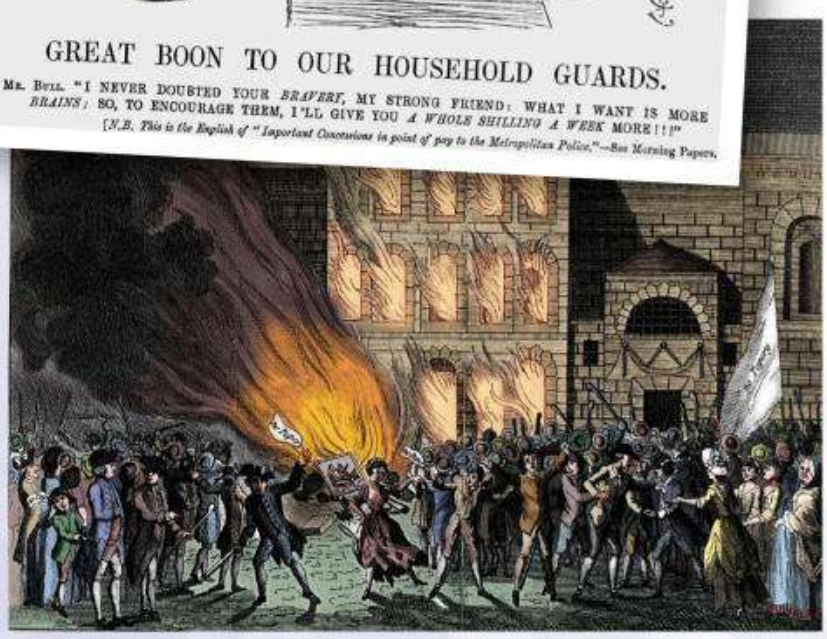
3 THE UNIFORM IS BLUE FOR A REASON

The determination to ensure that the Metropolitan Police did not appear 'military' was one reason for the blue tunic (as opposed to the red of the British infantry) and the stove pipe hat rather than a shako (a cylindrical military cap adorned with a plume). By the end of the 19th century, however, the police helmet was not greatly different from the infantry helmet. In contrast, the Irish Constabulary (Royal Irish from 1867) looked like the military French Gendarmerie; they were armed and stationed in small barracks on the main roads.

Metropolitan Police officers, c1890. Their uniform was designed to be distinct from military attire

"Men often joined the force to tide themselves over during a period of unemployment"


GREAT BOON TO OUR HOUSEHOLD GUARDS.
Mr. Bull. "I NEVER DOUBTED YOUR BRAVERY, MY STRONG FRIEND: WHAT I WANT IS MORE BRAINS: SO, TO ENCOURAGE THEM, I'LL GIVE YOU A WHOLE SHILLING A WEEK MORE!!!"
[N.B. This is the English of "Important Concessions in point of pay to the Metropolitan Police."—See Morning Papers.



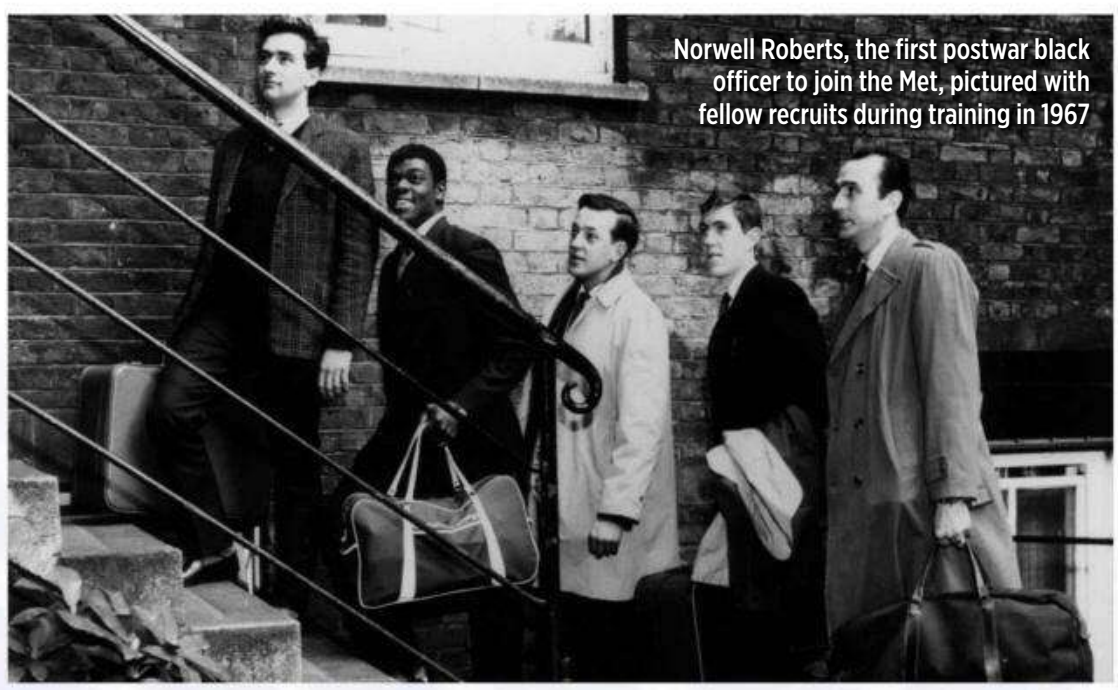
ABOVE: **The 1780 Gordon Riots prompted an early attempt to create a London police force** TOP: **With the Met initially attracting the unskilled, an 1870 cartoon shows 'John Bull' offering an extra shilling for officers with "more brains"**

4 JOINING THE FORCE WAS NOT ALWAYS A DELIBERATE CAREER CHOICE

Until the end of World War II, most rank and file police officers came from the semi skilled and unskilled working classes. Often, they did not join the force with a career in mind, but to tide themselves over during a period of unemployment. The pay was steady and did not depend on market fluctuations (unlike other working class jobs where the pay might, at times, be much higher). However, it could slip at times or, in a serious downturn, go down to nothing.

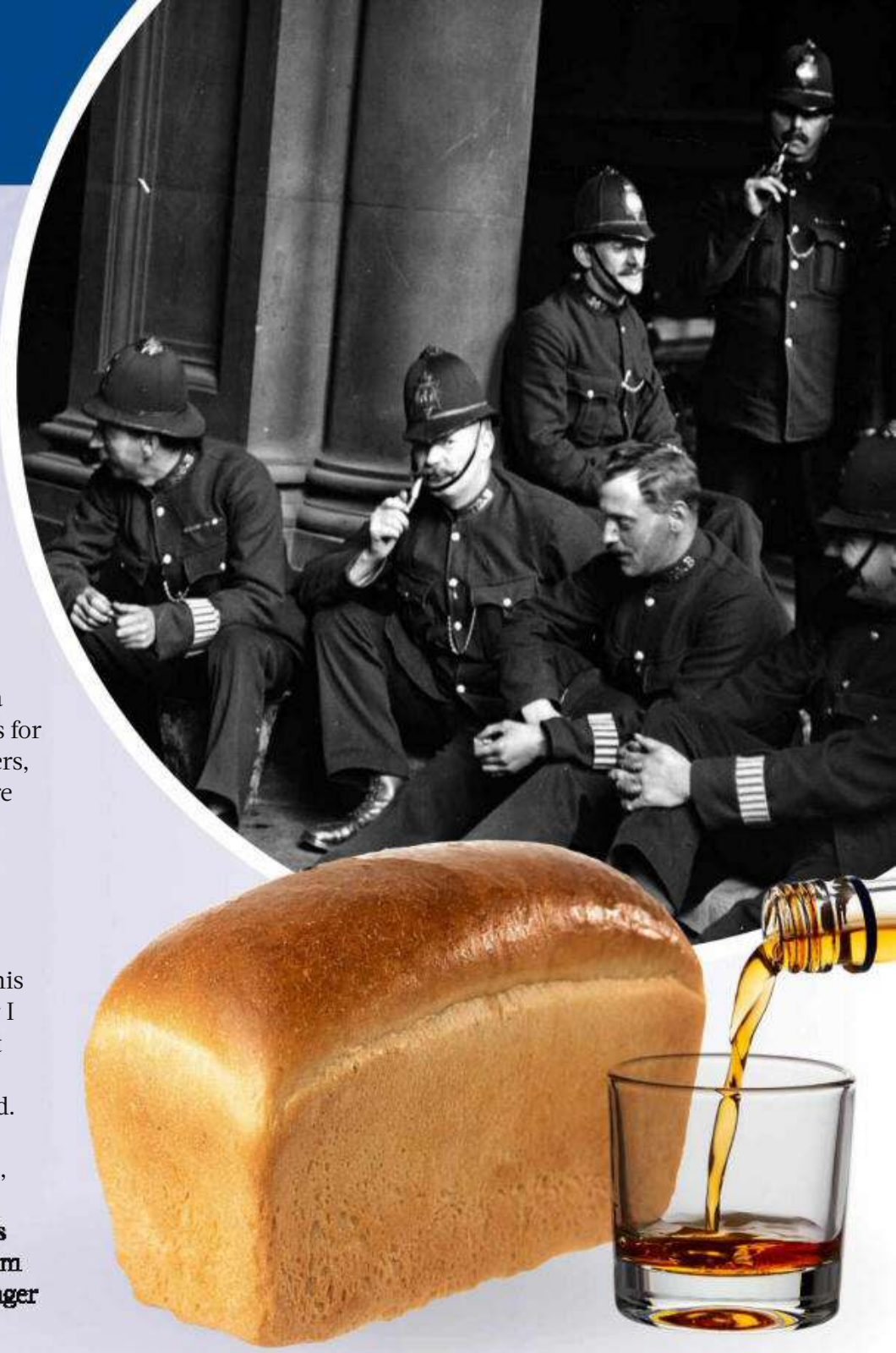
In smaller boroughs, the chief constable was usually a career policeman who had risen from the ranks and who had been born into the working class. In the larger towns and cities (and some counties), the chief constable was more likely to be a man who could fit in with the wealthy elite. Invariably he was a man used to commanding others, either in the armed forces or from one of the paramilitary imperial police forces such as the Royal Irish Constabulary or one of the forces in Imperial India. It was only between the two world wars that the government began to insist that such men had an awareness and experience of policing.

Despite Britain being a seagoing, imperial power, there were hardly any black or Asian officers before the 1970s. Even during the last 20 years of the 20th century, many police recruits faced considerable racial prejudice from their white fellow officers.



Norwell Roberts, the first postwar black officer to join the Met, pictured with fellow recruits during training in 1967

5 A POLICE WIFE'S PLACE WAS IN THE HOME



Policemen on strike, 1919. Despite perks such as free food (and, illicitly, alcohol), many officers were poorly paid and frustrated with their work

Unlike other working class groups, a policeman's wife was not allowed to take employment on her own behalf, which permanently limited the couple's income. The fear was that a policeman's working wife might be tempted to use her influence or be put under pressure because of her husband's job. Police officers were meant to appear as members of the 'respectable working class' (even if their pay was often significantly lower), and the wives of such men did not work.

Nevertheless, if a man was a village policeman, his wife was expected to act as his auxiliary taking messages if he was out on patrol or at court. Some chief constables allowed police wives to do a little domestic service or dressmaking, providing it did not stop her from looking after her home and family.

Depending on agreements with the local watch committee or Standing Joint Committee, police officers enjoyed a variety of perks, including rent assistance and even free family medical care. Many officers also benefitted from a number of unofficial perks, such as a free loaf of bread from the local bakery, or a weekly penny for acting as an alarm clock for workmen needing to get up in the morning. Not all police officers were angels, and some would abuse their position to partake in genuine criminal activity. Some accepted more illicit perks such as a case of whiskey from the bookmakers for closing a blind eye to their best runners, who took bets illegally in places where they worked and socialised.

The relatively low pay, restriction on family income and the hard life of patrolling every day in the open air, whatever the weather, ultimately fostered union activity in the force. This was most apparent during World War I and engendered two strikes the first in 1918 and the second in 1919 that affected several forces at the war's end. The second strike, which was over what form a police union should take, led to the establishment of the Police Federation of England and Wales. This meant that the police were barred from belonging to a trade union and no longer had a right to strike.

"Chief constables did their best to limit women's activities to typing, filing and making tea"

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X1

ABOVE: Some women, such as the recruits shown here, helped to police munitions works during World War I LEFT: A postcard from the era mocks the idea that women can do 'anything', telling the viewer that they still need men to have children

6 WOMEN WEREN'T RECRUITED TO THE FORCE UNTIL WORLD WAR I

The first women police officers were recruited during World War I to supervise young women who either worked in munitions factories or were feared to be 'pursuing' young men in uniform. Many chief constables were delighted to be able to get rid of women at the war's end in 1919, and regretted having to recruit them again in 1939. Chief constables did their best to limit women's activities to typing, filing and making tea.

The women officers who remained or who joined after World War II were largely limited to looking after women and children until the equality legislation of the 1970s, which made their role legally and practically the same as their male colleagues. Many male officers continued to see them as a potential problem, however, believing that men would be too worried about their female counterparts in order to do 'a man's job' effectively.

PROFESSOR CLIVE EMSLEY, who passed away in 2020, was founder of the Centre for the History of Crime, Policing and Justice (formerly known as the European Centre for the Study of Policing) and one of the world's foremost exponents of criminal justice history. His books include *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th Century to the Present* (Quercus, 2009). A version of this piece was originally published on our website, *historyextra.com*, in 2018

GET HOOKED

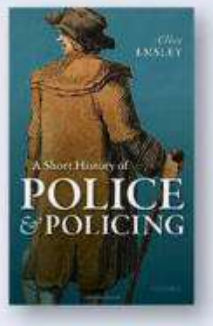
If we've whetted your appetite for the history of crime and punishment, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films, podcasts and TV and radio programmes?

BOOKS

Sister Sleuths: Female Detectives in Britain

By Dr Nell Darby
(Pen & Sword History, 2021)

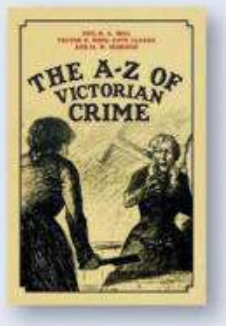
Dr Nell Darby sheds light on the female detectives who have worked over the past century and a half to uncover wrongdoing and solve crimes – from adopting different roles and disguises, to owning their own detective agencies.



A Short History of Police and Policing

By Professor Clive Emsley
(OUP, 2021)

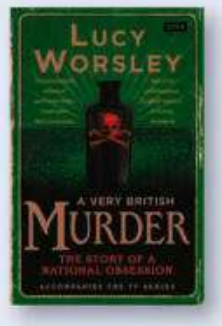
This book – written by the late Professor Clive Emsley before his death in 2020 – explores the idea and reality of policing, and traces the evolution of the multiple forms of law enforcement that existed in the past.



The A–Z of Victorian Crime

By Neil RA Bell, Trevor Bond, Kate Clarke and MW Oldridge
(Amberley Publishing, 2016)

Four historians delve into the stories behind some of Victorian Britain's most notorious crimes – from the Road Hill Murder to the Balham Mystery – alongside several long-forgotten, neglected cases.

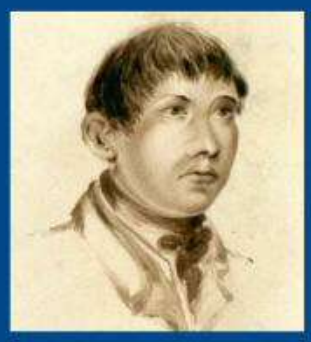


A Very British Murder

By Lucy Worsley
(BBC Books, 2013)

Dr Lucy Worsley explores the 19th-century fascination with murder, looking at how such crimes became a form of national entertainment, inspiring novels and plays, puppet shows and paintings, poetry and true-crime journalism.

ON THE BBC



BBC RADIO Bristol

▶ The Macabre Tale of John Horwood
bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09kbz5x
Explore a Bristolian true crime story of execution, dissection and a book bound in human skin in this programme narrated by actor Jack Ashton.

BBC RADIO 4

▶ Lady Killers with Lucy Worsley
bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0016pq3
Historian Dr Lucy Worsley investigates the crimes of Victorian women from a contemporary, feminist perspective.

BBC RADIO 4

▶ Voices from the Old Bailey
bbc.co.uk/programmes/b012stwb
Professor Amanda Vickery presents dramatised extracts from Old Bailey court cases of the 18th century and discusses with fellow historians what they reveal about the period.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

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▶ A murder mystery in 19th-century Dublin
Thomas Morris recounts a strange historical cold case revolving around a body found in a railway office that was locked from the inside. Listen at *bit.ly/3MYOW2b*

▶ Crime and punishment: everything you wanted to know
Dr Nell Darby responds to common questions and popular search engine queries about the history of crime and punishment. Listen at *historyextra.com/podcasts*

▶ Murder: a legal history
In this podcast from June 2021, Kate Morgan chronicles the legal history of murder, discussing the cases that helped shape UK law today. Listen at *bit.ly/3FrWnMM*

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Jack the Ripper: The Case Reopened

(now streaming on BBC iPlayer)

Using modern technology, Emilia Fox and Professor David Wilson revisit the crimes of Jack the Ripper. Watch at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0003wdk*

Legend (2015)

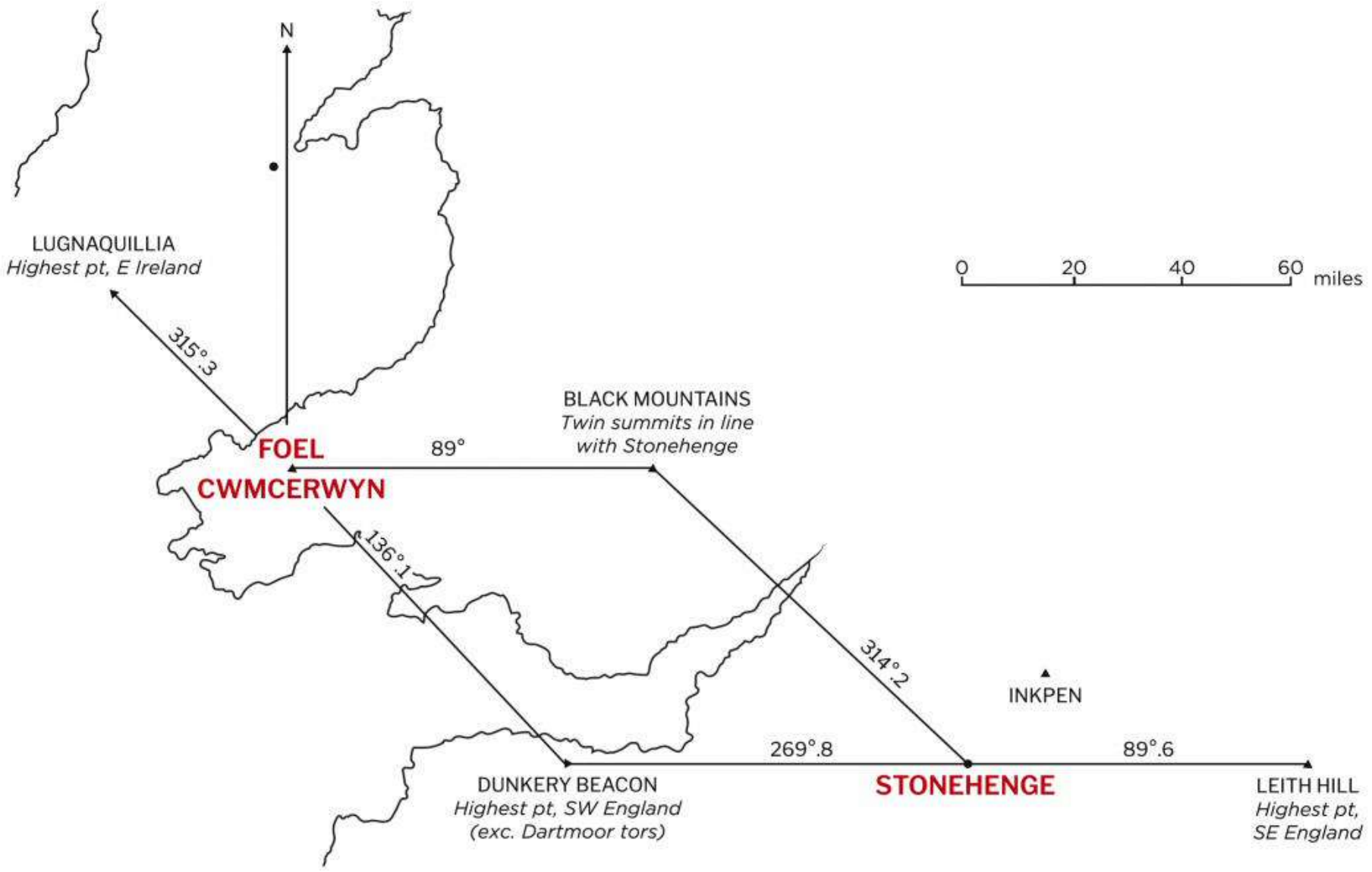
(now streaming on Amazon Prime, Apple TV and Google Play)

Explore the rise and fall of London's most notorious gangsters, twins Reggie and Ronnie Kray, who are both portrayed by Tom Hardy.

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3

THE MEANING OF STONEHENGE

Hills and Directions are the Keys



Dr Garth Weston has spent four decades investigating the influence of landscape features and the major directions on the location and design of stone circles, henges and standing stones.

Regional surveys of these intriguing structures were published in **Monuments and Mountains (2007)** - a catalogue providing the topographical and inter-site relationships of over 1,600 monuments.

STONEHENGE

Three of the highest hilltops in southern Britain lie east, west and north-west. Therefore this is an ideal location for communication with the powerful forces associated with principal summits and directions. Also including the axis points to Inkpen, the highest land in the region.

FOEL CWMCERWYN

Preseli Hills

The only commanding summit in the British Isles with views of important landmarks in four directions. The bluestones were moved to Stonehenge as tokens of the hill.

For more information please visit: thestonehengemap.co.uk

A FREE educational resource for anyone with an interest in Stonehenge

Douglas Mawson trekked 100 miles alone to reach base camp and the safety of his ship after the deaths of two of his expedition team

TO HELL AND BACK AGAIN

A POLAR EXPLORER'S TALE OF TRAGEDY AND SURVIVAL

Douglas Mawson is not the most famous hero of Antarctic exploration, but, as **Nige Tassell** reveals, the Australian overcame the odds in one of the age's most disastrous expeditions...

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

“I had time to say to myself, ‘So this is the end’, expecting every moment the sledge to crash on my head and both of us to go to the bottom unseen below.” Douglas Mawson was in a tight spot. He was in a hole, literally. Less than a month previously, he had been the leader of a three man team excitedly exploring the uncharted tundra of eastern Antarctica. He was now the only one left, having seen his teammates perish and left the bodies behind.

Then, during his solo effort to return to base camp in time to sail back to Australia all the while hampered by illness, acute pain and a worsening mental state Mawson had, much like one of his fallen colleagues a few weeks before, fallen into a crevasse, a deep open crack in the ice. It had been hidden by a thin layer of snowfall, but, fortunately, his sledge had wedged itself over the crack so that he didn’t fall. Instead, he was left dangling over the abyss and somehow managed to pull himself up to safety.

This was just one episode of Mawson’s Antarctic expedition. Soon afterwards, he fell into another crevasse and was saved only by being tied to a rope ladder. Apsley Cherry Garrard, a member of Captain Robert Scott’s *Terra Nova* expedition of 1910 13, titled his chronicle of that ill fated mission *The Worst Journey in the World*. Arguably, Mawson’s contemporaneous travails were even grimmer. His account of his own expedition deserved a more dramatic title than *The Home of the Blizzard*.

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURES

Douglas Mawson was born in Shipley in the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1882, but his family emigrated to Australia before his second birthday. After receiving degrees in mining engineering and geology from the University of Sydney, he became a lecturer in mineralogy and petrology at the University of Adelaide. In 1907, his academic mentor a Welsh-Australian geologist and Antarctica explorer by the name of Edgeworth David was invited to join Ernest Shackleton’s *Nimrod* expedition. He took with him two of his ex students, one of whom was Mawson.

During the expedition, in March 1908, David, Mawson and Scottish physician Alistair Mackay were the first to ascend Mount Erebus, one of the few active volcanoes in Antarctica. Three months later, they trekked more than 1,200 miles to reach the magnetic South Pole, claiming it for the British Crown (as opposed to the geographic South Pole, which was first reached in 1911 by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen).

For the return journey, Mawson became the unofficial leader of the party after Mackay threatened to certify the increasingly erratic David as insane unless he surrendered, in writing, control of the group. The three men made it to the coast fewer than 24 hours before the ship *Nimrod* set sail for home. But Mawson wouldn’t experience quite such good fortune in the future.

Having impressed Shackleton and other polar explorers, Mawson was offered a geologist’s position on Scott’s *Terra Nova* expedition in 1910. He turned it down. By then, he was busy trying to procure the funds for his own expedition. He was successful too; and on 2 December 1911, with its leader yet to reach his 30th birthday, the Australasian Antarctic Expedition sailed from Hobart in Tasmania aboard the ship SY *Aurora*. It arrived at what Mawson called Commonwealth Bay in Antarctica 36 days later. The purpose of the expedition was to explore King George V Land (as Mawson named it) and Adelie Land, the largely uncharted portions of Antarctica directly to the south of Australia.

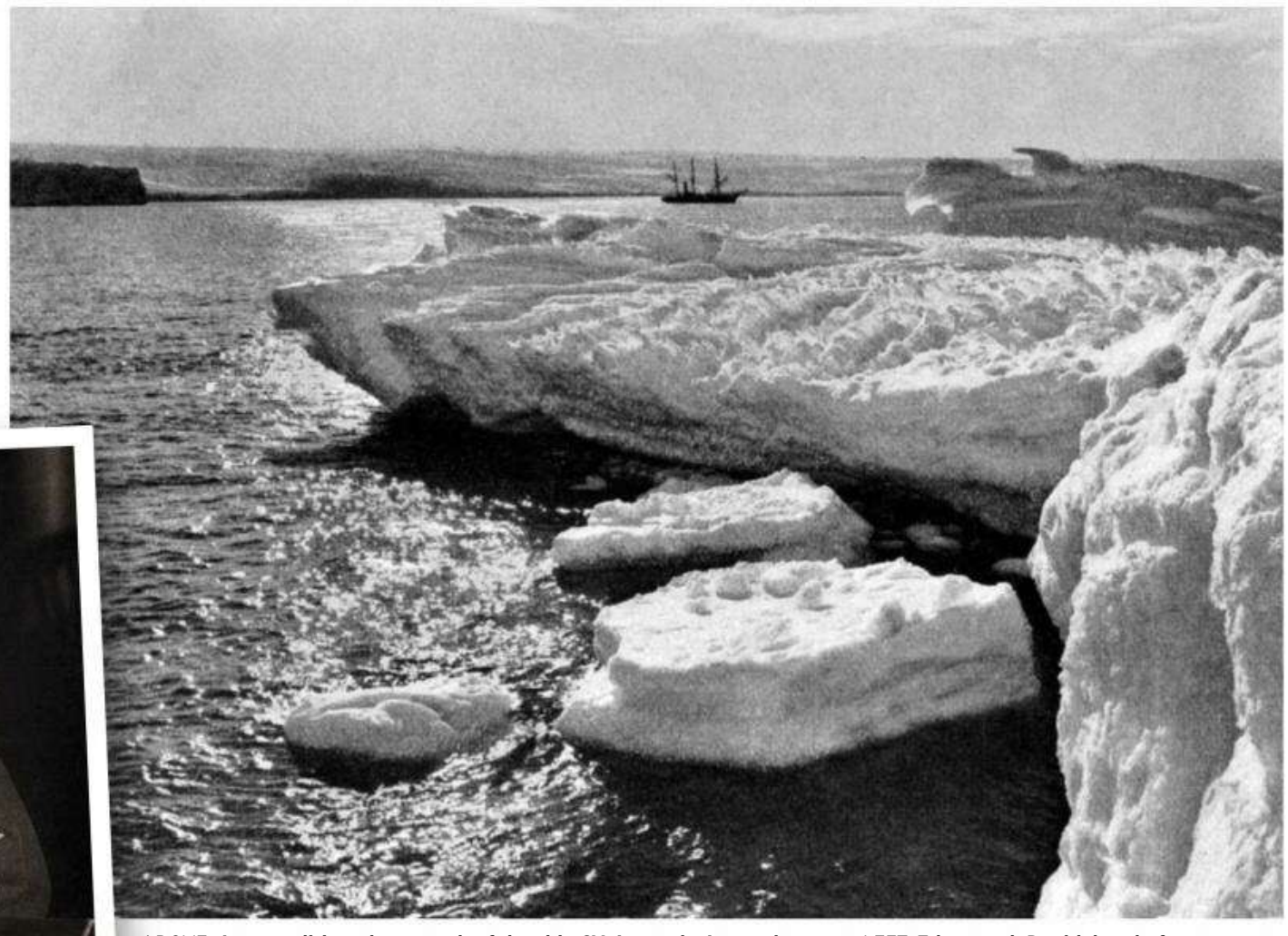
ABOVE: **Mawson’s Swiss teammate, Xavier Mertz, pictured at base camp. The law graduate was recruited for his skiing abilities**

TOP: **A photograph of English army officer Belgrave Ninnis, who was also part of Mawson’s team – until tragedy struck**

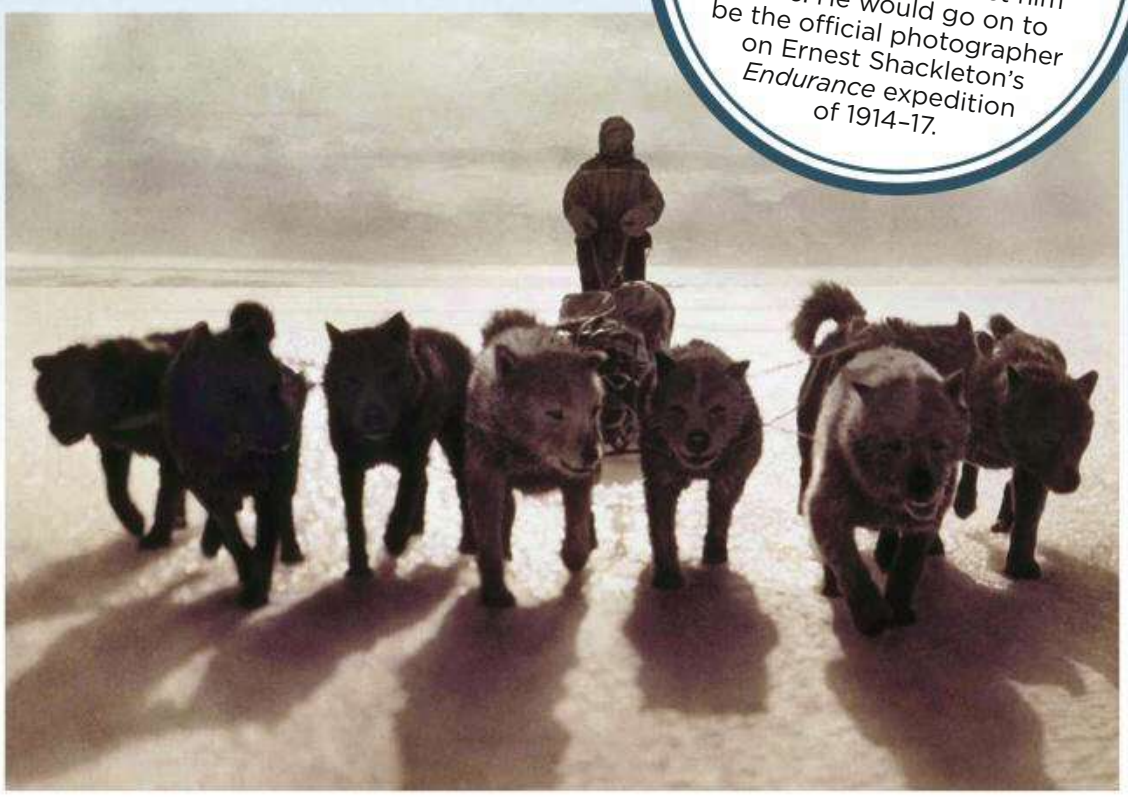
On the arrival of the *Aurora*, Mawson and his team set up a base camp at a spot they dubbed Cape Denison. It proved to be a somewhat inhospitable site for the 31-strong team, with near-constant high winds – capable, on occasion, of reaching 200mph. They spent the Southern Hemisphere winter there, squeezed into a hut to shelter from the unremittingly fierce blizzards. Mawson was one of the few men there with any experience of visiting Antarctica before.

TRAGEDY ON THE ICE

Once spring arrived and the blizzards became less frequent, Mawson divided his men into teams to explore separate regions. He joined with Swiss mountaineer and ski champion Xavier Mertz and English army officer Belgrave Ninnis to form the Far Eastern shore party. They were venturing the furthest in order to map the terrain. Leaving



ABOVE: **An expedition photograph of the ship SY *Aurora* in Antarctic waters** LEFT: **Edgeworth David, head of the party that reached the magnetic South Pole in 1909; afterwards, he declared Mawson the “real leader”**



DID YOU KNOW?

SAY FREEZE!

Among the personnel was Australian photographer Frank Hurley, who had to convince Douglas Mawson to let him come. He would go on to be the official photographer on Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition of 1914–17.

Cape Denison on 10 November 1912 with a pack of 17 huskies, the trio's progress was initially swift. Plotting the coastline and gathering geological samples as they went, within five weeks they had covered some 300 miles from base camp.

Their passage was not easy, though. Mertz recorded in his diary: "When there is sunshine, a gale blows with more or less drift. When it's windless, the clouds bring a bad diffused light." The issues weren't just meteorological, as he also complained of "stiff backs because we are sleeping on hard ground, and we have terrible dreams." Bad dreams would soon be the least of their problems.

On 13 December, Mawson took the decision to jettison one of their three sledges, their collective load now being lighter thanks to consumption of supplies, both human and canine. The next day, the recalibrated party reached a glacier: Mertz was on skis, Mawson riding one of the sledges, and behind them was Ninnis jogging alongside the other sledge, as he often preferred. The glacier, however, was pocked with invisible crevasses. Ninnis disappeared down one of these holes, which also consumed the sledge and the dogs pulling it.

"There was only enough food for 10 days – to get to base camp was a journey of at least a month"

ABOVE LEFT: **Blizzards and fierce winds meant the team spent weeks confined inside their cramped base camp**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Huskies were vital in traversing the Antarctic terrain, but at a cost. None of Mawson's dogs survived**

TOP: **An expedition team sets out with sledges laden with equipment from the expedition's main hut**

When Mawson and Mertz realised what had happened behind them, they raced to the edge of the crevasse and called down to Ninnis for a full three hours. All they were greeted with was silence. Certain that he was dead, the pair held a short memorial service before assessing their situation. And it was grave. Mawson's rationalising of their cargo meant the lost sledge had been carrying the team's tent and the vast majority of their supplies. Now there was only enough food for 10 days, and no dog food at all.

"MAY GOD HELP US"

The obvious decision was to turn around and try to get back to base camp as quickly as possible – a journey of at least a month. Ideally, they would go via the coastline where there was the possibility of catching penguins and seals to eat. Still, their chances looked bleak. Mawson mournfully wrote in his diary: "9 hours after the accident, started back but terribly handicapped… May God help us."

They travelled for 27 hours straight in order to retrieve a spare tent cover that they had previously jettisoned. Using skis as tent poles, they managed to fashion a rudimentary shelter. But subsequent progress was slow: Mawson developed snowblindness, which his colleague attempted to ameliorate by administering eyebaths using a solution of cocaine and zinc sulphate.

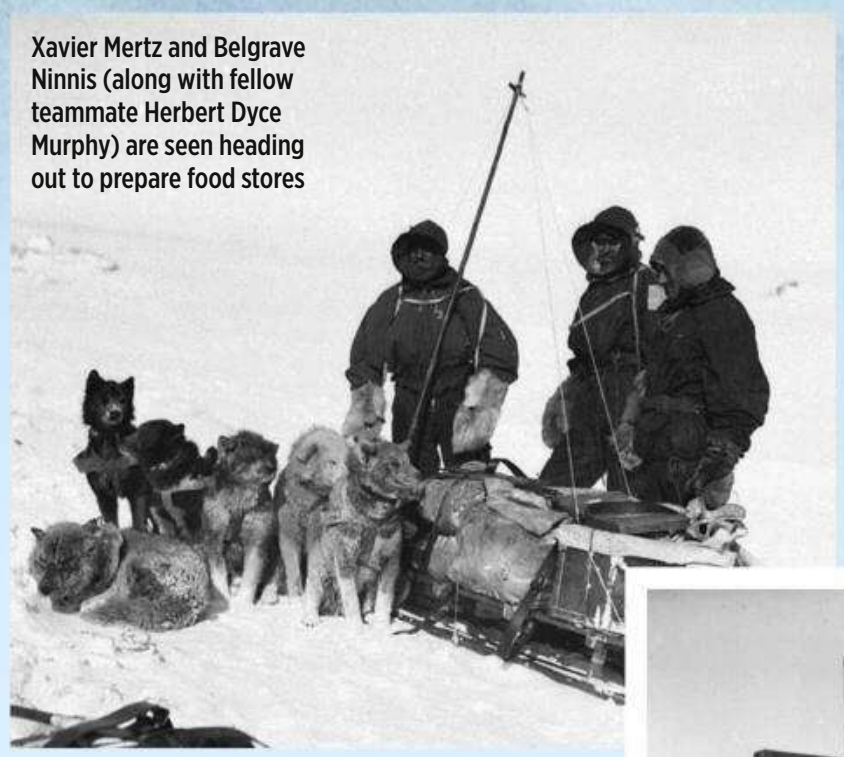
Despite severe rationing of supplies, the food soon ran out. There was no alternative than to sacrifice some of the weaker dogs. Even so, these rations didn't stretch far. "Their meat was stringy, tough and without a vestige of fat," Mawson later wrote in *The Home of the Blizzard*. "We were exceedingly hungry, but there was nothing to satisfy our appetites… Each animal yielded so very little."

Both men's health worsened, with Mertz suffering more than Mawson. The Swiss struggled to eat the tougher

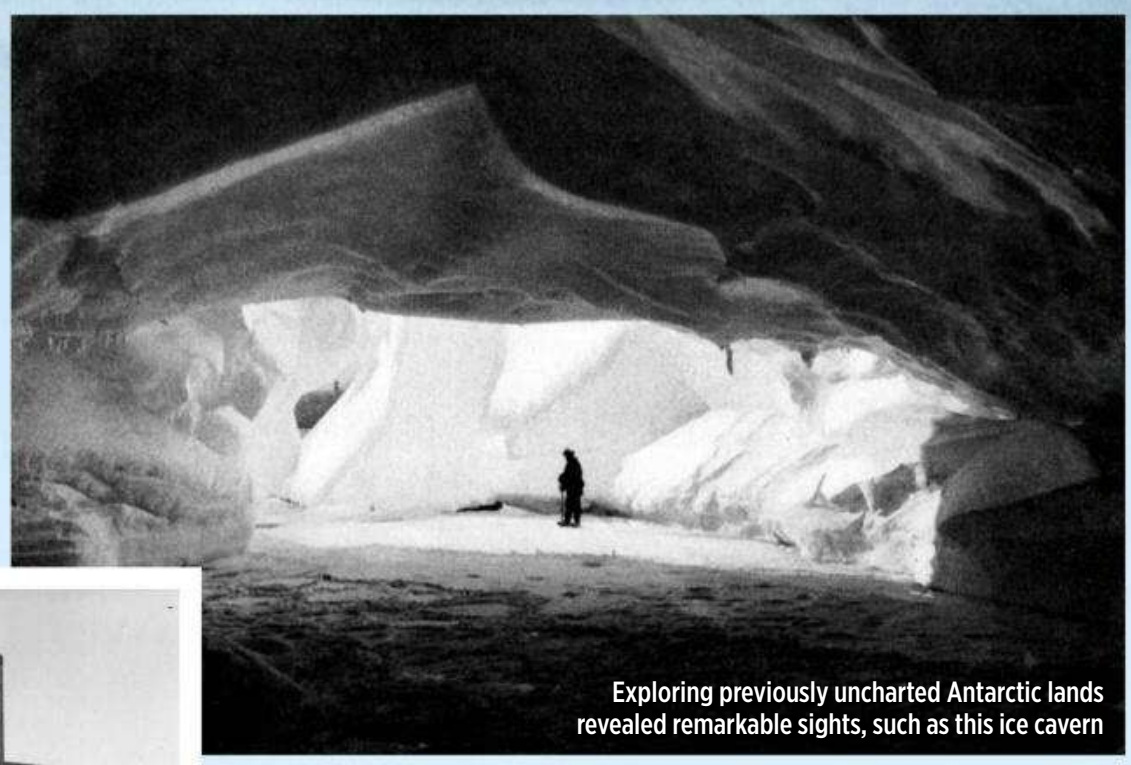
ALAMY X7

The winds at base camp could reach 200 miles per hour, making any activity outside near impossible

"The soles of his feet had come away, leaving loose flaps of skin – he had to bandage them back in place"



Xavier Mertz and Belgrave Ninnis (along with fellow teammate Herbert Dyce Murphy) are seen heading out to prepare food stores

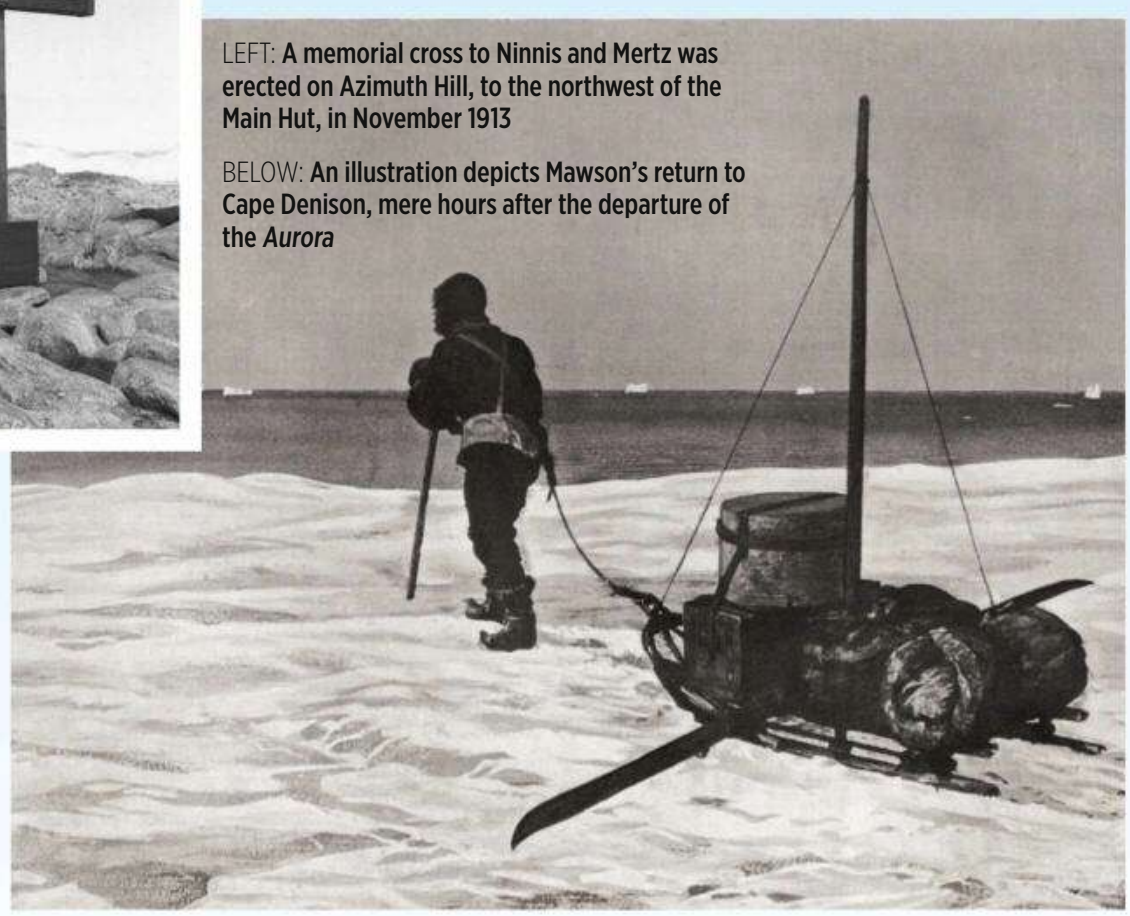


Exploring previously uncharted Antarctic lands revealed remarkable sights, such as this ice cavern

Snow piled up quickly around, and sometimes inside, the expedition hut

LEFT: **A memorial cross to Ninnis and Mertz was erected on Azimuth Hill, to the northwest of the Main Hut, in November 1913**

BELOW: **An illustration depicts Mawson's return to Cape Denison, mere hours after the departure of the *Aurora***



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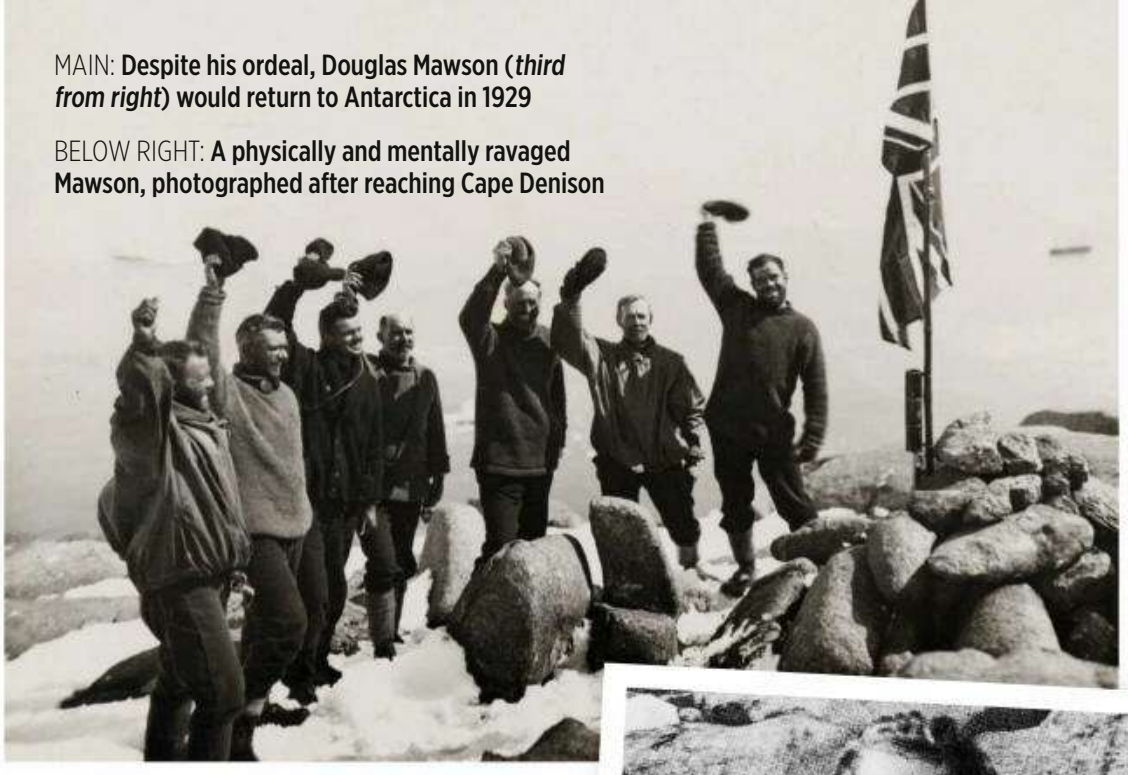
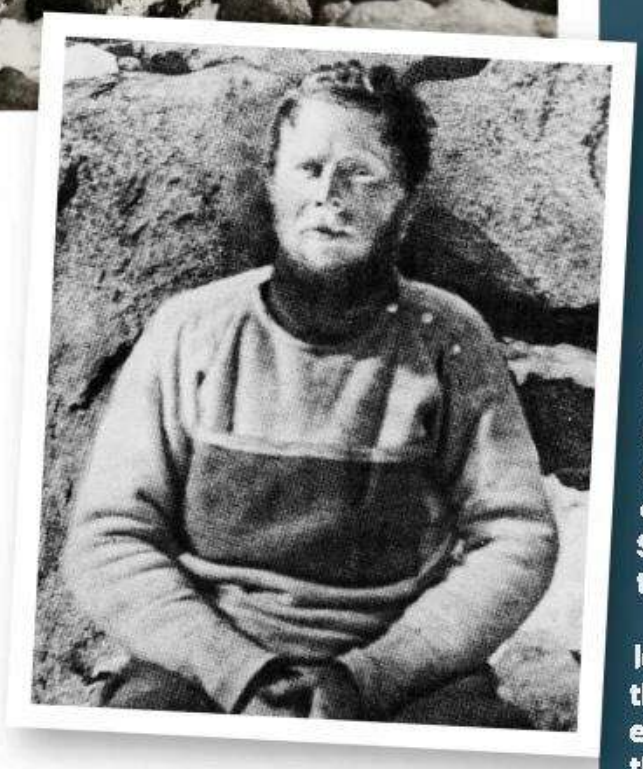


MAIN: **Despite his ordeal, Douglas Mawson (*third from right*) would return to Antarctica in 1929**

BELOW RIGHT: **A physically and mentally ravaged Mawson, photographed after reaching Cape Denison**



◀ meat and so ate more of the dead dogs' livers. It had yet to be discovered that husky liver was a significant source of vitamin A, the high ingestion of which is toxic to humans. Mertz suffered from diarrhoea and delirium, the latter leading him to bite off the top of his little finger.

His condition grew extremely grave until he suffered a series of seizures and slipped into a coma, from which he never emerged. Mertz died on 8 January 1913, his body entombed under a modest cairn of ice blocks. Mawson was, by his own admission, "utterly overwhelmed by an urge to give in". He was still 100 miles away from base camp, and now had to make the journey alone.

The *Aurora* was scheduled to pick up the expedition on 15 January, but there was no chance of Mawson making that rendezvous. Even cutting a sledge in half and carrying only the barest essentials, he was not covering enough ground each day. When walking became agonising, he discovered that the soles of his feet had come away, leaving loose flaps of skin. Desperate not to stop, he had to bandage them back in place and trudge on. At most, he could hope to cover five miles a day. When 15 January came, he calculated he was still 87 miles from Cape Denison and wouldn't get there until February. And that didn't factor in his imminent, near fatal fall into that crevasse.

ONLY HOURS BEHIND

Having survived the crevasse, Mawson's luck finally picked up a little. He came across a cairn containing food and a dated note from worried members of his expedition, sent out as a search party. They had left the cairn only a few hours before. Spurred on by the thought of catching them up, Mawson covered an additional eight miles that day. Three days later, he reached a supply dump christened Aladdin's Cave 10 miles from base camp, inside which was a pineapple and three oranges. Mawson hungrily demolished them.

Yet this fevered sense of excitement for the end of his journey was neutralised by a five-day blizzard that rendered him immobile, trapped in an ice hole. Then when he was able to press on, the story took one more twist. On his arrival at Cape Denison, he spotted the *Aurora* in the distance, having set sail just hours earlier. Six expedition members had stayed to continue searching for their leader and his two companions, and put in a radio call for the ship to turn around and collect them. But the weather had the last say, making a rescue attempt impossible. Mawson and the remaining party were forced to spend another winter at Cape Denison another winter held in Antarctica's cruel grasp.

Mawson eventually left for Australia in the December of 1913. Despite the pain, suffering and fatalities, the expedition was not without its successes, with large portions of the Antarctic coastline now mapped and defined. The extra year also allowed Mawson to study the Southern Lights and discover the first meteorites in Antarctica. He was knighted in 1914 and, the following year, awarded the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Gold Medal. In 1916, the American Geographical Society bestowed on him the David Livingstone Centenary Medal.

Following his wartime service and a number of years in academia, Mawson would return to Antarctica in 1929 as leader of the British Australian and New Zealand Research Expedition. It was, to his infinite relief, a much less eventful mission than his last visit. ⊙

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL

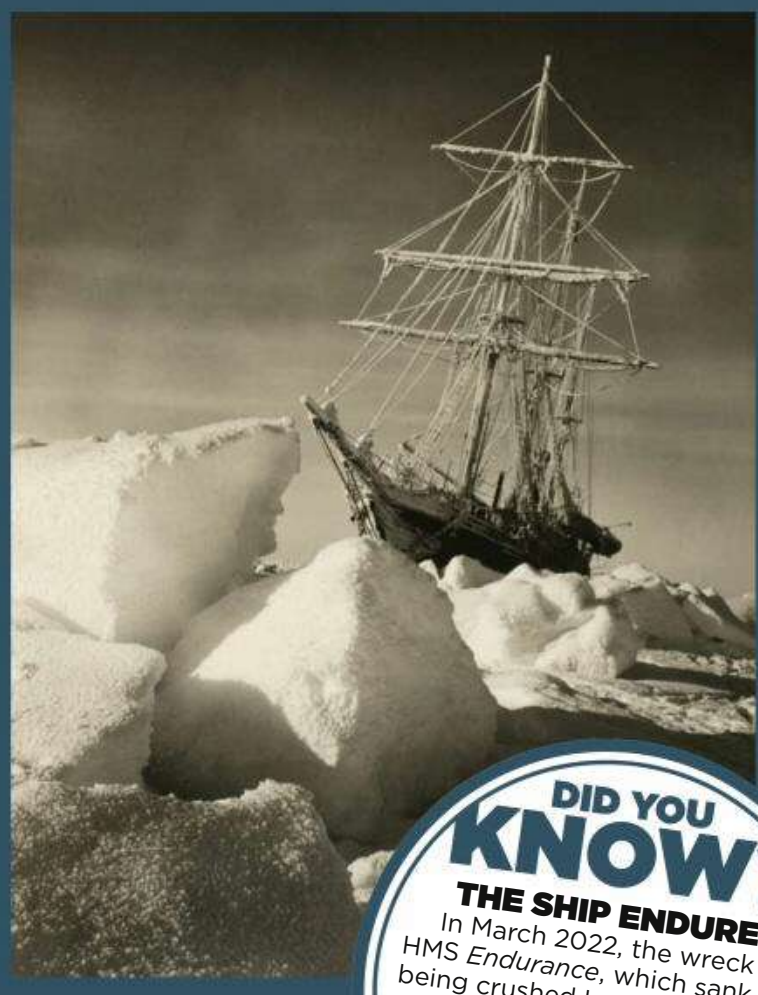
THE HEROIC AGE OF ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION

The frozen continent at the bottom of the world was the new frontier for explorers

Setting sail in December 1911, Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition was just one of 16 major expeditions to the southernmost continent during a period that became known as the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration. These voyages of discovery – undertaken before major advances in telecommunications, transportation and nutrition – emphasised the human qualities that made their protagonists 'heroic': bravery, resilience and stoicism in the face of unimaginable physical hardship in the name of discovery.

These expeditions made their leaders renowned across the globe, but often for tragic reasons. Captain Robert Falcon Scott, who led two missions to Antarctica, famously reached the geographic South Pole in 1912, only to discover that Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had arrived there 33 days earlier. The heartbreak didn't end there. All five of Scott's team – including Scott himself – perished on the return journey back to base camp.

Between 1907 and 1922, Ernest Shackleton led three trips to Antarctica, including both the pioneering *Nimrod* and the later *Endurance* expeditions. The latter saw his ship trapped in, and then crushed by, pack ice. Like Scott, Shackleton lost his life to Antarctica's clutches, suffering a heart attack on board the exploration ship *Quest*, in 1922. Douglas Mawson might not be the most celebrated of the heroic Antarctic explorers, but at least he got out of that frozen world alive.



When *Endurance* was trapped in ice, Ernest Shackleton's expedition turned into one of survival

DID YOU KNOW?

THE SHIP ENDURES

In March 2022, the wreck of HMS *Endurance*, which sank after being crushed by pack ice during the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 107 years earlier, was located at the bottom of the Weddell Sea. It remains in a remarkable state of preservation.

1. THE ARK

In her preparatory sketches for the painting, we can see that Knights originally planned for the piece to depict a central ark with animals being loaded onto it. Instead, the ark is shown sliding away, almost imperceptibly, in the background, emphasising the hopelessness and futility of the figures rushing up the hill to escape the cascading water behind them.

2. MOTHER AND CHILD

The woman at the centre of the painting is modelled on Knights' mother, Mabel; the baby cradled in her arms is her baby brother David, who died in 1915. Tragically, Knights, too, would lose a child later in life – she gave birth to a stillborn son in 1928.

3. FORMER LOVER

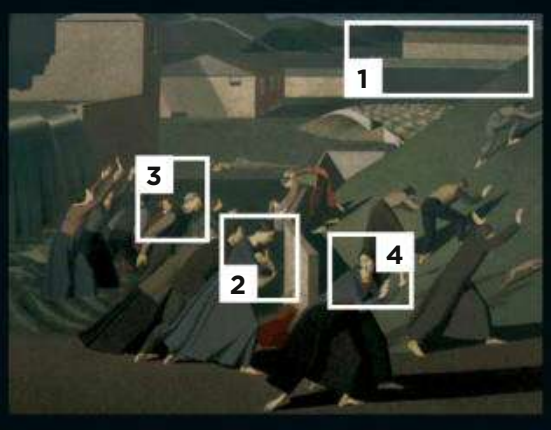
Knights frequently used models from her inner circle. This man is modelled on Arnold Mason, a fellow artist and friend to whom Knights was briefly affianced.

4. SELF-PORTRAITS

Knights appears twice in the image: as the taut, elongated figure with outstretched hands and open mouth in the centre-foreground, and also as the woman in red behind the figure of Arnold Mason.

WHAT GREAT PAINTINGS SAY

A striking work of art borne of the horrors of World War I



The Deluge

by Winifred Knights, 1920

Despite being painted more than a century ago, Winifred Knights' apocalyptic work could be reflecting some of the big issues of today. Her dramatic depiction of terrified figures scrambling to reach higher ground as water levels rise around them has a strikingly modern feel against a 21st century backdrop of climate change and the displacement of people all over the world.

"Knights was something of a star pupil during her time at the Slade School of Art, University College London," says Emma Chambers, curator of modern British art at Tate, "and in 1920, she was shortlisted for the prestigious Rome Scholarship. Her entry – this 5ft x 6ft interpretation of Noah and the biblical flood – wowed the judges, and she became the first woman to win the award. In October 1920, she took up the scholarship at the British School at Rome to study decorative painting and learn more about Italian classical and Renaissance art."

FEAR AND MEMORY

The work was displayed in the Rome Scholars exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in February 1921 and immediately caught the eye of the press; before long, Knights was being billed as one of the rising stars of her generation. 'Girl Artist Remodels the Flood' exclaimed a headline in the *Daily Graphic* on 8 February, going on to describe the piece as "an example of anarchy in art, original, tragic, and inspiring and something distinctly new and compelling in its treatment of a great theme". But behind the painting's success lay the dark memories of a world at war.

"One of the most striking things about *The Deluge* is its sense of terror, a feeling that Knights likely brought to the work from personal experience," says Chambers. "In January 1917, she witnessed the horrific explosion at a munitions factory in Silvertown, East London [in which 73 people were killed and hundreds more injured]. The tragedy had a profound effect on her; it was a pain she later fed into the fleeing figures that we see in *The Deluge*."

Indeed, World War I had a huge impact on Knights. The trauma of the Silvertown explosion and the severe anxiety she experienced during Zeppelin raids over London saw Knights leave her studies in 1917 for the relative peace of the Worcestershire countryside. She would return to the Slade in 1918, at the end of the war.

"Knights didn't produce a huge number of works during her short life and she was a slow, meticulous worker," says Chambers. "She was part of a postwar revival of religious painting that emerged in response to World War I as a way of processing what had happened. One Europe-wide artistic reaction to the conflict was to return to a more traditional, figurative style of painting – known as a 'return to order' – setting aside the fragmented, modernist styles of prewar art." It was against this backdrop that Knights painted her prize-winning painting, whose elongated figures, sharp edges and straight lines combine elements of modernism with that of the Renaissance.

Knights – now married – returned to England in 1925–26 but, despite her initial success, was never able to achieve widespread recognition in her lifetime. In February 1947, she died of a brain tumour, aged just 47. But *The Deluge*, with its overwhelming air of terror and fear in the face of impending doom, continues to resonate today as much as it did 100 years ago.

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

GET HOOKED

The Deluge is on display at Tate Britain, London. For more details and to plan a visit, see *tate.org.uk*

ALAMY

CATCHING THE RED FOX

On the surface, Klaus Fuchs was a diligent young scientist, enthusiastically helping Britain and the US develop powerful new weapons during World War II. But, as **Roger Hermiston** reveals, his true loyalties lay elsewhere

BBC WORLD SERVICE

Complements the new series of the BBC World Service podcast *The Bomb*

GETTY IMAGES X2

Klaus Fuchs pictured in 1959. The German-born scientist, who had sought refuge in Britain during the 1930s, was found guilty of spying for the USSR

Early in April 1941 at a party in Flat No 6 in the gleaming, white, ultra modernist Isokon Building (otherwise known as the Lawn Road Flats) in London's leafy Hampstead, there was an encounter between two men that would affect the course of the 20th century. It could also, if there had ever been tangible evidence it had taken place, have meant the hangman's noose for one of the participants.

The younger of the pair was tall, thin, with round spectacles and a high forehead, and wore a serious expression on his face. The other, with sharp chiselled features and rather feminine eyes, appeared notably more relaxed despite a stiff, military bearing.

The individuals concerned were German born Klaus Emil Julius Fuchs, a brilliant 29 year old theoretical physicist just released from an internment camp in Canada, and 40 year old Simon Davidovich Kremer, a former tank commander and now officially secretary to the military attaché at the Soviet Embassy in London.

They had one thing in common they were both committed communists with the interests of Stalin's Soviet Union at heart. This was fine for Kremer, whose day job was official business for the Kremlin although by night, as it were, he was a spy, working for the Soviet 'Fourth Department' of military intelligence (the GRU).

Fuchs, however, was doing everything he could to conceal his ideological beliefs from his British hosts. It was bad enough but not surprising, given his nationality and the suspicions of wartime that he had just spent six months in camps in the Isle of Man and Canada. But to have had his past Communist Party associations revealed would have put an end to his application for British citizenship and his hopes of an academic career in the country.

SEALING THE DEAL

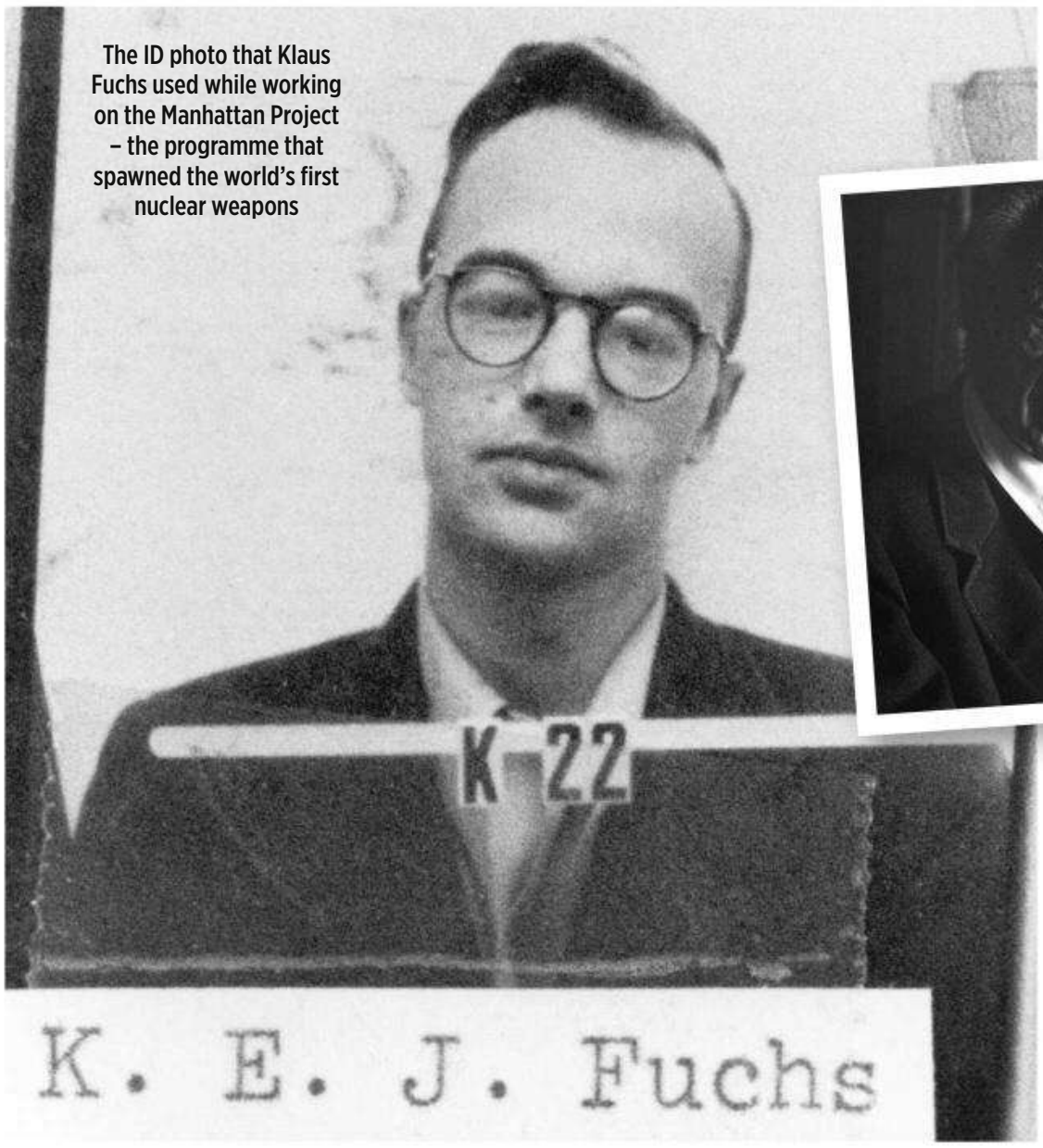
The meeting between Fuchs and Kremer although the latter introduced himself to Fuchs by his pseudonym, 'Alexander Johnson' had been engineered by the flat's owner, Jurgen Kuczynski, ostensibly a well respected economist, but in secret a prime mover in Communist Party circles and, moreover, a leading recruiter of British spies for Stalin.

Kremer, who spoke excellent English, purported to show a keen interest in science, and the two men chatted about the potential of the atom. Such was their rapport that Fuchs was persuaded by Kremer to send him a short account about atomic energy once he was back at his post at the University of Edinburgh.

It's not clear whether Fuchs realised Kremer was Russian, and that he was being set up as a possible agent for Soviet intelligence. If he did, he would surely have been nervous. In April 1941 the Nazi Soviet non aggression pact was still in force, and although Britain wasn't officially at war with the Soviet Union, any aid to its ally, Germany (Britain's enemy), would have been classed as treason under the new Treachery Act, which had been passed in 1940. Anyone found guilty of such a crime would have risked facing the death penalty.

As it was, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa two months later, which changed everything. The Soviet Union became Britain's ally, and when Kremer came calling at Fuchs' door again in August, the latter knew exactly what the Russian was about – and had no hesitation in agreeing to spy for a country in whose system he wholeheartedly believed.

An undated image shows Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov (*left*) meeting with Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. The pair signed a non-aggression pact in 1939, but it would last a mere two years



The ID photo that Klaus Fuchs used while working on the Manhattan Project – the programme that spawned the world's first nuclear weapons

Economist Jürgen Kuczynski, who helped recruit Fuchs as a Soviet spy while living in Britain

SINISTER MOTIVES

That meeting in April 1941 was the first step on the road to Fuchs becoming the most influential spy of the 20th century, an accolade due him because he would

Hitler's launch of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 resulted in the Soviet Union becoming Britain's ally – and made Fuchs' activities somewhat less risky

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1

eventually hand his new masters in Moscow the ultimate secret – that of the atom bomb. Not only that, but he would also feed them details of the next fearsome weapon of mass destruction, the hydrogen bomb, before his arrest in 1950 put an end to his treachery.

The FBI developed an acronym – MICE - for assessing the motivations of traitors. 'M' for the lure of money, 'I' for ideological motives, 'C' for reasons of compromise or coercion (ie blackmail) and 'E' for ego, for the stimulating power of betrayal. For Klaus Fuchs read 'I' and 'E'; the unwavering belief in the communist system, and – surprising to those friends who saw a generous, convivial, yet unassuming man – the satisfaction of being like a spider at the centre of an espionage web.

If MI5 had bothered to get hold of Fuchs' Gestapo file and read it when he fled to England in September 1933, it would have rung the loudest of alarm bells. Born in Rüsselsheim, Fuchs came from a notorious family described by one paper as "the red foxes of Kiel" (*Fuchs* being German for fox), by way of both the colour of their hair and their politics.

Fuchs was involved in student politics early on, joining the Social Democratic Party and becoming a member of their paramilitary organisation. Expelled from the party as his views moved further left, he joined the Communist Party of Germany – a dangerous decision with the Nazis on the move and about to take power. Beaten by the Gestapo and hunted down by them after the Reichstag fire of 1933 (which was blamed on the Communists), he fled to Britain and found a place at the University of Bristol.

Once there, Fuchs kept his politics very quiet and concentrated on making

"If MI5 had bothered to get hold of Fuchs' Gestapo file, it would have rung the loudest of alarm bells"

his way in the field of theoretical physics. He was quickly recognised as an outstanding talent and drawn into a group of scientists working on highly classified atomic research which included Rudolph Peierls, a fellow émigré German.

In March 1940 it had been Peierls, along with the Austrian Otto Robert Frisch, who produced the startling memorandum setting out, for the first time, how an atomic bomb (Peierls labelled it a 'superbomb') could be constructed from just a small amount of fissile uranium 235. Peierls thought very highly of Fuchs, and just a month after Fuchs had met 'Mr Johnson', he invited his protégé to join him in work "whose purpose I cannot now disclose". Fuchs thus joined the team of scientists urgently working out the means to make an atom bomb before Germany, with all its remaining outstanding physicists, got there first.

ABOVE LEFT: **Like Fuchs, fellow scientists William G Penney, Otto Frisch, Rudolf Peirels and John Cockcroft (*left to right*) relocated from Britain to work on the Manhattan Project**

ABOVE RIGHT: **The US chemist Harry Gold (*centre*) was found to have acted as Fuchs' courier, conducting regular meetings with the German in Santa Fe**

TOP: **A sign reminding employees at the Allis-Chalmers plant in Milwaukee, where parts of America's atomic weapons were produced, to keep quiet about their work**

It was the beginning of Fuchs' eight-year career as a prolific agent for the Soviet Union, the brightest and the best of all Stalin's atom bomb spies. At first, MI5 as much concerned about his nationality as about his communism, which they didn't know the half of were reluctant to grant him security clearance. But eventually they relented, and Fuchs became a key member of Britain's atom bomb project, code named 'Tube Alloys'.

When it became clear that war ravaged Britain could not financially and industrially support an atom bomb venture to its conclusion, all the effort moved to the US, to the Manhattan Project in the secret town of Los Alamos, New Mexico. Fuchs relocated there with the rest of the elite British scientists, and was soon making notes, drawing diagrams and compiling all the details he could on the development of the atom bomb for his American courier, Harry Gold, an industrial chemist working for the Soviet secret police agency, the NKVD.

Astonishingly, against all the rules of espionage, Gold often elected to meet Fuchs at the bridge over the river in the pretty town of Santa Fe. In broad daylight, just 200 yards from the La Fonda hotel (which was stacked

with FBI agents), Fuchs would be handing over crucial information about the implosion mechanism of the new plutonium bomb.

The 'Trinity' test – the codename for the detonation of the first A-bomb – was successfully carried out by the US in the New Mexico desert on 16 July 1945. When President Truman told Stalin at the Potsdam Conference later that month that the US now possessed a "new weapon of unusual destructive force", he was surprised by the Soviet leader's lack of interest. But it was no shock to Stalin, as Fuchs had been feeding him information about the A-bomb's progress over the previous three years.

A MOST TESTING TIME

The US dropped its atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945. The world was then taken aback four years later when the Soviets successfully tested their own A-bomb in Kazakhstan, two or three years earlier than US scientists had expected. Fuchs had, of course, contributed to this success.

The physicist might well have got away with his treachery and ended his days garlanded by the scientific establishment and the British government, not just for his war work but for his efforts in advancing Britain's new nuclear industry once the conflict had ended. He would very likely have been Sir Klaus Fuchs.

But the Venona project, the successful decrypting of thousands of messages sent home by Soviet agents in America in the 1940s, eventually unmasked him. In 1949 he was clearly identified as the agent code-named 'CHARLES' in the decryptions

Hard-nosed MI5 interrogator William James 'Jim' Skardon finally managed to extract a confession from Fuchs

"He might well have got away with his treachery and ended his days garlanded by the British government"

one message, dated 10 April 1945, calling CHARLES' information "about the atomic mass of the nuclear explosive" of "great value".

THE FOX IS SNARED

In early 1950, MI5 put Fuchs under surveillance, tapping his phones at home and at the Harwell Atomic Energy Research Establishment where he worked, and dispatching 'watchers' to follow him. He gave nothing away, until the dapper, pipe-smoking former policeman Jim Skardon, MI5's key interrogator, sat down with him.

On Tuesday 24 January, in his fourth interview, Fuchs finally broke and confessed to Skardon. "I still believe in communism, but not as it is practised in Russia today," he declared. In the days and weeks that followed, one objective was to protect his sister Kristel, who lived in Boston and had been aware peripherally of his spying activities.

Klaus Fuchs was tried at the Old Bailey on 1 March 1950. He was convicted on

Allied leaders Churchill, Truman and Stalin (*left to right*) at Potsdam in July 1945. Stalin was already well acquainted with the Manhattan Project by this time

A pair of scientists pose outside the Trinity test site, where the world's first nuclear device was detonated on 16 July 1945

The atom bomb would be used to devastating effect on Hiroshima (*above*) on 6 August 1945, and again on Nagasaki three days later

ABOVE: A mushroom cloud rises into the skies near Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, following the Soviet Union's first nuclear test in 1949

LEFT: The 1949 test caused considerable alarm within the US, which had by now entered into a cold war with its former allies

GETTY IMAGES X9, ALAMY X1

Fuchs arrives at London Airport following his release from prison in 1959, having served a reduced sentence

ABOVE: **Mourners at Fuchs' funeral in East Germany, where the physicist had settled after his release**

RIGHT: **Fuchs' simple headstone belies the impact that his actions had on the creation of the world's most destructive weapons**

four counts of espionage and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment, the maximum for espionage at that time. If that meeting in April 1941 had been part of the prosecution's evidence aiding an enemy in wartime he might have been face to face with the public executioner Albert Pierrepoint, rather than facing the walls of a cell in Wakefield Prison.

Fuchs was released on 23 June 1959, having had his sentence reduced by a third for good behaviour. Returning to East Germany to a hero's reception, he continued his work on nuclear research, right at the very top of the country's scientific establishment. Among many accolades, he was given the Patriotic Order of Merit and the Order of Karl Marx. He died in Dresden on 28 January 1988, aged 76.

It is said that a lecture Fuchs gave to Chinese physicists shortly after his prison release helped that country to develop its first atomic bomb, the 596, in 1964 becoming the fifth nation to possess nuclear weapons in an increasingly dangerous world.

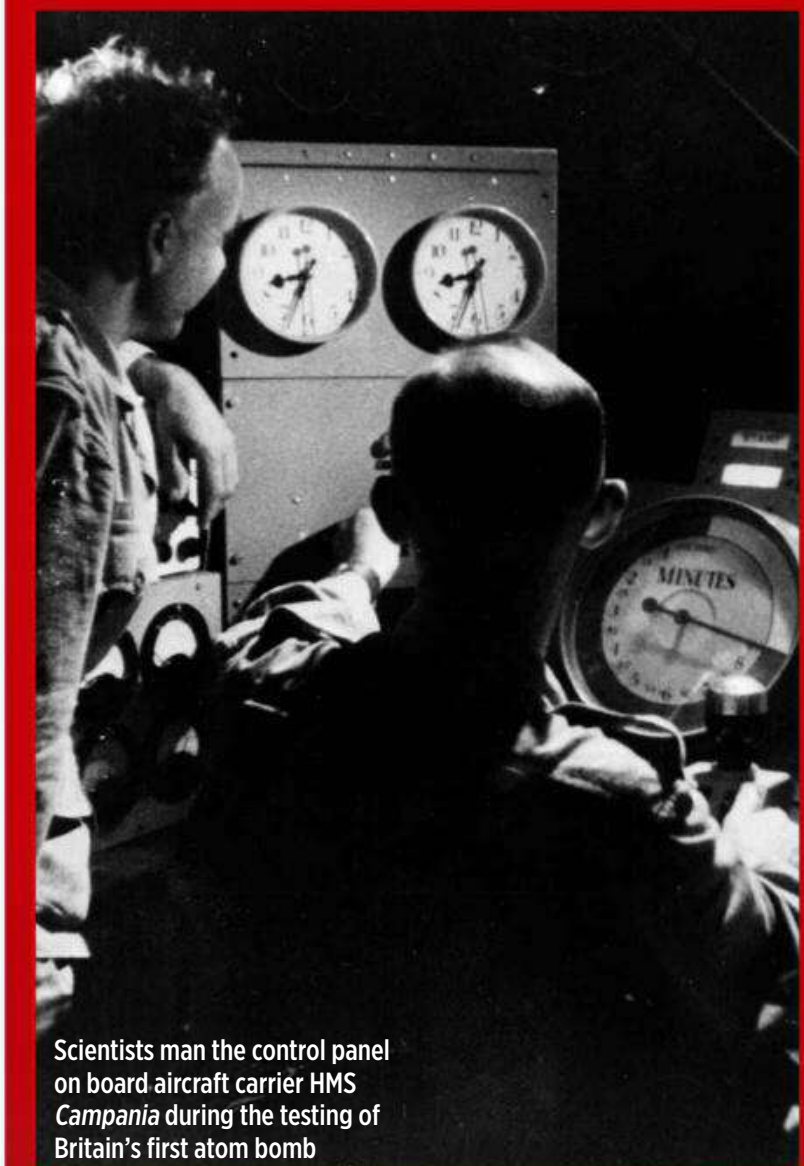
ROGER HERMISTON is a writer and journalist. His latest book is *Two Minutes to Midnight: 1953 – The Year of Living Dangerously* (Biteback Publishing, 2021)

GET HOOKED

LISTEN

BBC WORLD SERVICE

A new series of *The Bomb,* a podcast telling the story behind the world's first atomic weapons, will be available from July. Listen at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08qz3ty*



Scientists man the control panel on board aircraft carrier HMS *Campania* during the testing of Britain's first atom bomb

THE MAKING OF A NUCLEAR NATION

Discovering a Soviet spy within its ranks did not deter Britain's scientists from developing a formidable atomic arsenal

Wartime collaboration between America and Britain over nuclear weapons ground to a halt in 1946 when Congress passed the McMahon Act, forbidding the US from sharing atomic information with its closest ally. As a result, Clement Attlee's new Labour government decided to go it alone and develop its own A-bomb programme – Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin famously telling the secret cabinet meeting in October 1946, "We've got to have this thing over here, whatever it costs... we've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it".

In October 1952, on the frigate HMS *Plym* in the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Western Australia, Britain successfully tested its atom bomb. Five years later, in the Operation Grapple tests in the Pacific Ocean, it then joined America and the Soviet Union in the hydrogen bomb club.

During the 1950s and 60s, Britain's nuclear bombs were designed to be carried in the air, by V-bombers. Then came the transition to a submarine-based deterrent, first with the Polaris ballistic missile system (1968), and these days with Trident, carried by four Vanguard-class vessels.

As for the nuclear warhead count today, Russia is thought to have around 6,200, the US 5,550, China 350, France, 290 and the UK 225.

WHAT IF... THE BLACK DEATH HAD NEVER HAPPENED?

Professor Mark Bailey tells **Nige Tassell** why the world would have become a very different place had the plague outbreaks of the 14th century not triggered fundamental changes in society

Although the Black Death first struck during the seven years between 1346 and 1353, its effects would be felt for centuries after, particularly as outbreaks continued right up until the 18th century. The catastrophic loss of life – with as much as 50 per cent of the population being wiped out in certain regions – had a seismic effect across the globe, whether economically, socially or religiously. The world would never be the same again. But what would the planet look like had the pandemic never happened?

To begin, Mark Bailey – professor of late medieval history at the University of East Anglia, and author of *After the Black Death* (Oxford University Press, 2021) – explores the effect that such enormous population loss had on England. "The relentless population growth in pre-plague Britain had resulted in a perilously small size of landholding, a major rise in the proportion of landless and destitute, and a society highly sensitive to the slightest calamity, such as harvest failure. Economic growth had faltered because of a lack of effective demand and low living standards."

Had there been no pandemic, there would have been little impetus for this to change. However, the decimation of the working population created an enormous labour shortage, causing wages to rise and inequality to narrow. Without the Black Death, explains Professor Bailey, "England would have remained trapped in this desperate cul-de-sac of poverty, underemployment and low productivity".

It wasn't just the English economy that was profoundly recalibrated; it was the same across Eurasia and North Africa. "The loss of up to half the population meant that all economies were much smaller after the Black Death, and remained so for at least the next two centuries. Some regions – such as Mamluk Egypt – suffered declining wealth per head, whereas other regions such as Britain – enjoyed rising wealth."

SERFDOM AND SANITATION

Professor Bailey identifies a range of structural changes, born out of the Black Death and its reverberating aftershocks, that accelerated the economies of northwest Europe, "including increased rates of urbanisation, a decline in wealth inequality, a shift towards industrial and retail activities, greater participation of women in the labour market, and the rise of the nuclear family. It is arguable that, without the Black Death, the Industrial Revolution would never have happened, or at least would have been delayed by centuries."

In northwest Europe, serfdom gradually disappeared. With the pandemic bringing land rates down, "ordinary people could obtain land more cheaply and easily" while enjoying "more freedom to choose where, when and if to work" as "more wealth trickled down the social scale". Had the Black Death not occurred, the conditions for improved incomes would not have presented themselves for centuries.

Without the pandemic, certain advances in medicine and living conditions would have also advanced much more slowly. Firstly, observes Professor Bailey, attention would not have been given to hygiene and sanitation had there not been such a catastrophic physical contagion. For example, England's Sanitary Act of 1388, which included new measures to keep the streets free from filth, would not have been on the political agenda.

Secondly, without the lessons learned from the Black Death, public health would have continued to falter.

IN CONTEXT

The Black Death, also known as the Great Pestilence, profoundly reshaped Eurasian society in the middle of the 14th century. In the seven years in which it was rampant, the pandemic claimed as many as 200 million lives. Such a huge loss of life – as much as 50 per cent of the population in certain areas, a proportion that sometimes took two centuries to restore to pre-plague levels of population – obviously had enormous consequences for all aspects of society, including the economy, the class system and the power of organised religion. The plague rocked the world on its axis and diverted the course of history.

A woodcut from the 1493 *Nuremberg Chronicle* depicts plague victims 'dancing'

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

MAIN: **An illustration from the chronicles of Gilles le Muisit, an abbot from Tournai, shows a mass burial in 1348 – the year the Black Death first hit much of Europe**

INSET: **A similar scene of devastation is found in this 19th-century engraving, imagining what Florence would have looked like in the same year**

Instead, from the 1370s onwards, the practice of quarantining and banning certain public activities became a standard reaction to potentially equally debilitating pandemics.

Quarantining, along with a growing provision of isolation hospitals, had an additional benefit in northern Italy, laying down the foundations of the Renaissance "by generating confidence in the ability of humans to respond effectively to divine punishment. This coincided with a resurgent intellectual interest in the philosophical works of ancient Greece and Rome that is, texts containing human ideas, not just the major religious works. This created optimism that human ideas and action, not just divine providence and wisdom, might shape future society." Ergo, no Black Death, no Renaissance at least not at that moment in time, or in that location.

For others, the Black Death meant heightened religious engagement, as the pandemic was "interpreted as a manifestation of divine displeasure". As such, "the populace sought to atone for sin and to reduce the amount of time their souls spent in purgatory. This was mainly channelled through orthodox religious outlets, such as hearing masses or charitable activities." Accordingly, the power of organised religion was emboldened by the pandemic.

DID YOU KNOW?

A CLOSE CALL

Despite being a centre of commerce, Milan escaped the Black Death outbreak of 1346–53 almost entirely unscathed. Only three households are thought to have fallen victim to the plague, and according to chronicles, the disease was contained.

"WITHOUT THE PANDEMIC, CERTAIN ADVANCES IN MEDICINE AND LIVING CONDITIONS WOULD HAVE ADVANCED MORE SLOWLY"

STAYING AT HOME

Another consequence of the Black Death identified by Bailey involves the European arrival in what became North America. "Rising populations and the pressure to colonise new lands had contributed to the Nordic discovery and settlement of western Greenland by the 13th century," he observes.

However, the halving of population numbers, along with a severely reduced economy, meant the need, or ability, to conquer faraway lands had dissolved. "It is arguable that without the Black Death, and with continued population pressure, northern Europeans would have colonised the eastern seaboard of modern Canada and the United States decades before the Portuguese discovery of the West Indies and South America." And what a different world that might have been.

LISTEN

A new six-part *HistoryExtra* podcast series, *The Black Death*, examines how the pandemic shook the Middle Ages. Listen now at *historyextra.podlink.to/TheBlackDeath*

NEXT MONTH

What if... Queen Victoria had been assassinated?

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331.6

The diameter, in metres, of the prehistoric Avebury stone circle in Wiltshire, one of the largest such monuments in Europe.

SO FULL OF THEMSELVES
The first set of Russian dolls, similar to the example shown here, was designed and painted by Moscow artist Sergey Malyutin (*below*) in 1890

Are Russian dolls Russian?

SHORT ANSWER **The souvenir staple is quintessentially Russian, but open it up and you may see Japanese influence**

LONG ANSWER Their look is iconic: a colourful wooden figurine of a smiling woman in a headscarf, which can be opened to reveal another, smaller figure inside. And so on and so on. Also known as *matryoshka* (mother) dolls or sometimes referred to as *babushka* (old woman) dolls, the figures most often take the form of traditional Russian women as a symbol of family and fertility, but they can depict virtually anything. Around the end of the Cold War, for instance, sets of caricatured Soviet leaders were also popular.

The quintessentially Russian nesting dolls are most certainly Russian. The original set, from 1890, was designed and painted by Sergey Malyutin and crafted by Vasily Zvyozdochkin, both residents of the Abramtsevo estate artists' colony near Moscow. The pair were part of the children's education workshop, tasked with making toys, and it is possible that they drew inspiration for their creation from a series of Japanese dolls called the Seven Lucky Gods, although this has never been officially confirmed.

It wasn't long before the duo's nesting dolls – of eight figures, starting with a woman holding a rooster and ending with a tiny baby – went international when a set was displayed at the 1900 world's fair in Paris, the Exposition Universelle.

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X1

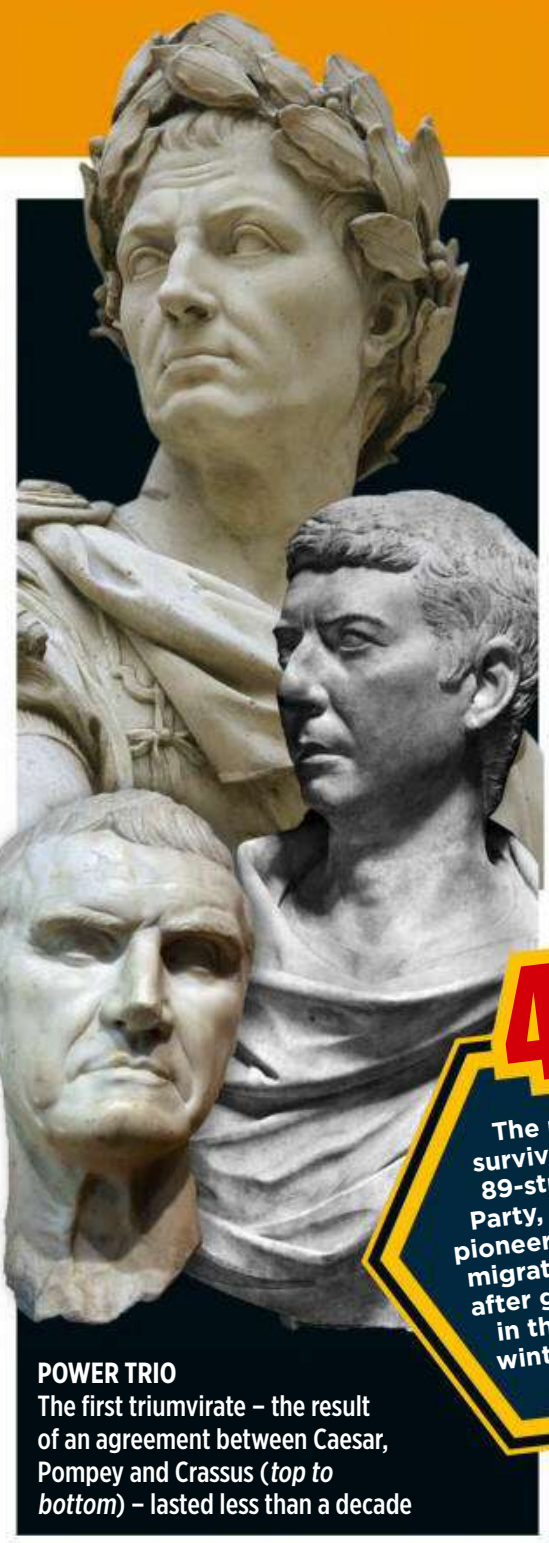
What were the Roman triumvirates?

SHORT ANSWER The road from republic to empire was pretty rocky as three men vied for power... twice

LONG ANSWER Before the Romans threw out the ideals of a republic in favour of an empire, there were a couple of periods when the three most powerful men formed an alliance, or triumvirate, to rule/seize power for themselves.

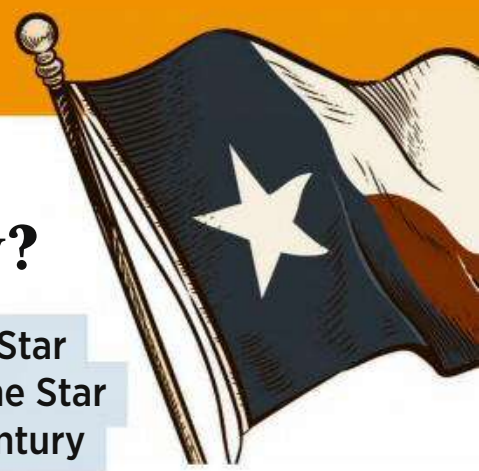
The first began in 60 BC with a secret agreement between Gaius Julius Caesar, the obscenely wealthy Marcus Licinius Crassus and the soldier Pompey. Personal animosities meant it lasted less than a decade and ended in civil war and Caesar's dictatorship.

The Second Triumvirate came after Caesar's assassination in 44 BC. His adopted son Octavian and supporters Mark Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus formed an alliance to bring order and hunt down the killers. That also ended with civil war, from which Octavian (using the name Augustus) rose as the first emperor.



POWER TRIO
The first triumvirate – the result of an agreement between Caesar, Pompey and Crassus (*top to bottom*) – lasted less than a decade

Was Texas ever its own country?



SHORT ANSWER The Lone Star State was, briefly, the Lone Star Nation in the mid-19th century

LONG ANSWER Texas became the 28th state to join the Union in 1845, bringing its decade-long run as a sovereign nation to an end. In 1836, shortly after a revolution broke out against Mexican rule, the Texians (not Texans) had declared independence.

The Republic of Texas had its own flag (*pictured above*), laws and presidents – most famously a former general named Sam Houston – and was much larger than today's state. As a huge, unsettled land, the Republic proved an ideal hideout for Mexican and American outlaws fleeing justice in their own countries.

Mexico refused to acknowledge the Republic and its borders were in constant dispute, staying so when Texas joined the US. This led to the Mexican–American War, which ended in an American victory (and Mexico's recognition of US sovereignty over Texas) in 1848.

47
The number of survivors from the 89-strong Donner Party, the American pioneers attempting to migrate to California, after getting trapped in the snow in the winter of 1846–47.

GOING IT ALONE
An illustration depicts Texians celebrating their freedom from Mexican rule in 1836

Is that ugly baby photo of Hitler real?

SHORT ANSWER It was a pre-Photoshop hoax, much to the surprise of the Führer and the real baby's mother

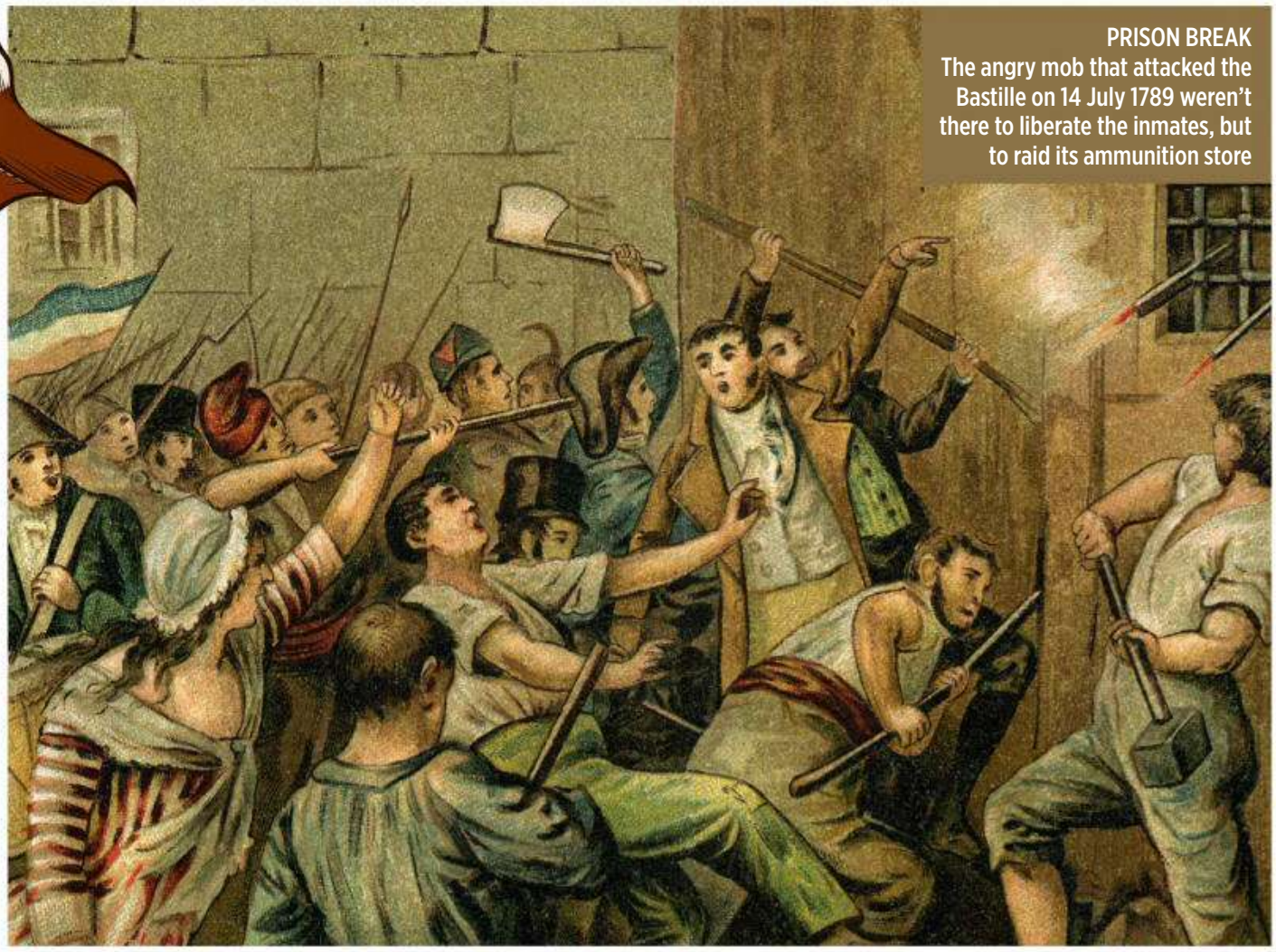
LONG ANSWER When Adolf Hitler saw a photo of him as a baby being printed in newspapers and magazines across the world, he was Führer-ious. It certainly wasn't a flattering snap, but what annoyed Hitler, though, was that it was a total fake.

The subject of the photo was actually a two-year-old American boy named John May Warren, sat on a blanket in his native Connecticut in 1931. And although the version of the image that appeared in the global press depicted Warren with greasy hair and a menacing stare, the original snap instead showed him sporting a bonnet and an innocent expression.

The heavily doctored image had been acquired by Acme Newspictures and first circulated in 1933, but it wasn't until 1938 that the true identity of the baby was discovered, when Warren's mother, Harriet, saw the image in a copy of *Life* magazine. However, the identity of the forger – and how they got hold of the original photo in the first place – both remain a mystery to this day.

ENFANT TERRIBLE
A heavily edited photo of John May Warren (*above*) was passed off as a baby photo of Adolf Hitler, forcing the Nazis to issue some real pictures of the Führer as a child (*right*)

GETTY IMAGES X5, ALAMY X4, JEFFREY DAVIS PHOTO X1



PRISON BREAK
The angry mob that attacked the Bastille on 14 July 1789 weren't there to liberate the inmates, but to raid its ammunition store

Who were the prisoners at the Bastille?

SHORT ANSWER The Parisian fortress was pretty low on inmates when the storm came

LONG ANSWER The storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 was the spark that ignited the French Revolution. The fortress prison in Paris was hated as a symbol of royal despotism and abuse of power, and the mob that broke through its gates were willing to fight, and die, to seize it. But they weren't there to free the prisoners – they were more interested in liberating the ammunition store.

Besides, there were only seven inmates. Four of the men were lowly counterfeiters and forgers, while another, Auguste-Claude Tavernier, had been locked up for three decades for trying to assassinate Louis XV. The other two – Irish-born James Whyte and the Comte de Solages – were imprisoned at the requests of their families for lunacy and alleged sexual perversions respectively.

Talking of sexual perversions, if the mob had arrived 10 days earlier, they would have also found the Marquis de Sade – author of the notorious *120 Days of Sodom* – imprisoned in one of the cells.

DID YOU KNOW?

PEDANTIC POOCH

According to an account published in France in 1670, Philippe, Duke of Orléans (and brother of King Louis XIV), owned a dog that was capable of arranging books in alphabetical order by author.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

The fashion for pointy shoes caused a "plague of bunions" in 14th and 15th-century England, according to archaeologists who, in 2021, revealed that 27 per cent of skeletons from a Cambridge dig had the condition.

MAY, AND WILL, FLY

Anglo-Irish aviator Lilian Bland is thought to have been the first woman to build and fly her own plane, which she did in 1910. She dubbed her creation the *Mayfly*, saying: "It may fly, it may not."

COMING UP TRUMPS

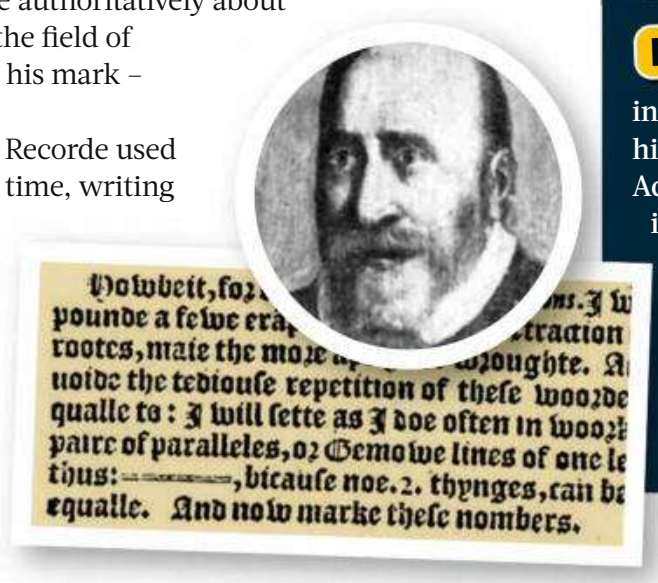
There was a society in 18th-century London called The Farting Club, where members tried to "out fart" each other. They dieted on cabbage, onions and porridge in order to help with their flatulent performances.

Who invented the equals sign?

SHORT ANSWER All things being equal, the honour goes to a Welsh mathematician

LONG ANSWER The 16th century Welshman Robert Recorde recorded quite the polymathic career. He attended Oxford at 15, served as personal physician to two Tudor monarchs, and wrote authoritatively about geometry and astronomy. But it was always the field of mathematics in which he was going to leave his mark – a mark of two parallel lines.

In his 1557 work, *The Whetstone of Witte*, Recorde used the lines as a symbol for 'equals' for the first time, writing that "noe 2 thynges can be moare equalle". Recorde's motivation was simply to "avoid tedious repetition" of the phrase 'is equal to', and it seemed that many people agreed. By the 18th century, the sign was in use across Europe.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A MARK OF GENIUS
A portrait of Robert Recorde, along with his description of the equals sign

Exactly how wealthy was Mr Darcy?

SHORT ANSWER In Austenian terms, he was a multi-millionaire

LONG ANSWER The wealth of Jane Austen's romantic hero, Fitzwilliam Darcy, is well stated in *Pride and Prejudice*: an annual income of £10,000 from his investments and his Derbyshire estate, Pemberley. Adjusting Darcy's financial holdings into today's standards is fraught with difficulty, however. That amount in the early 1800s can be estimated to be worth between half a million pounds and, in one BBC study, £838,000. But economics is trickier than that, since inflation and the cost of living should be taken on board. Darcy's income could be as much as £13 million, and some studies put it even higher. Not too shabby.

ANOTHER FAMOUS VICTORY
The 1424 battle of Verneuil saw France defeated once again

What was the ‘second Agincourt’?

SHORT ANSWER Nine years after that historic victory on Saint Crispin’s Day, the longbow struck again

LONG ANSWER The battle of Agincourt, fought on 25 October 1415, was a watershed moment in England’s history: a far-outnumbered army defeated their French foe; King Henry V’s legacy was gold-plated; and Shakespeare would have the subject for one of his best plays.

In terms of the Hundred Years’ War, the English had all the momentum and Henry went on to conquer Normandy and secure the French crown, but that did not mean everything went their way. Victory for France and its Scottish allies at the battle of Bauge in 1421, followed by Henry’s death a year later, gave the French an opportunity to kick the English off the continent.

With the war in the balance, the two sides met at the battle of Verneuil on 17 August 1424. But again, the English longbowmen won the day, leaving the French and Scots decimated. England was dominant once more, thanks to what was celebrated as the ‘second Agincourt’.

3.2

The legally definitive definition of Pi (rather than the endless 3.14159...), according to an 1897 bill proposed by the Indiana General Assembly.

What is the world’s oldest crown?

SHORT ANSWER It could be a Copper Age metal ring found in Israel... as long as it’s actually a crown

LONG ANSWER In 1961, more than 400 ancient artefacts were discovered inside a cave in the Judaean Desert, Israel. Dubbed the Nahal Mishmar Hoard, the astonishing treasure trove – which included sceptres, mace heads, horns, tools and weapons – was estimated to date from the Copper Age, around 6,000 years ago.

Among the objects was a thick ring of metal with carved vultures and doorways perched on top, which has since been lauded as the oldest-known crown in history. There is a slight issue, however: it may not be a crown at all, but a stand for an urn.

HALLOWED HEADGEAR?
The Nahal Mishmar ‘crown’ is now exhibited at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem

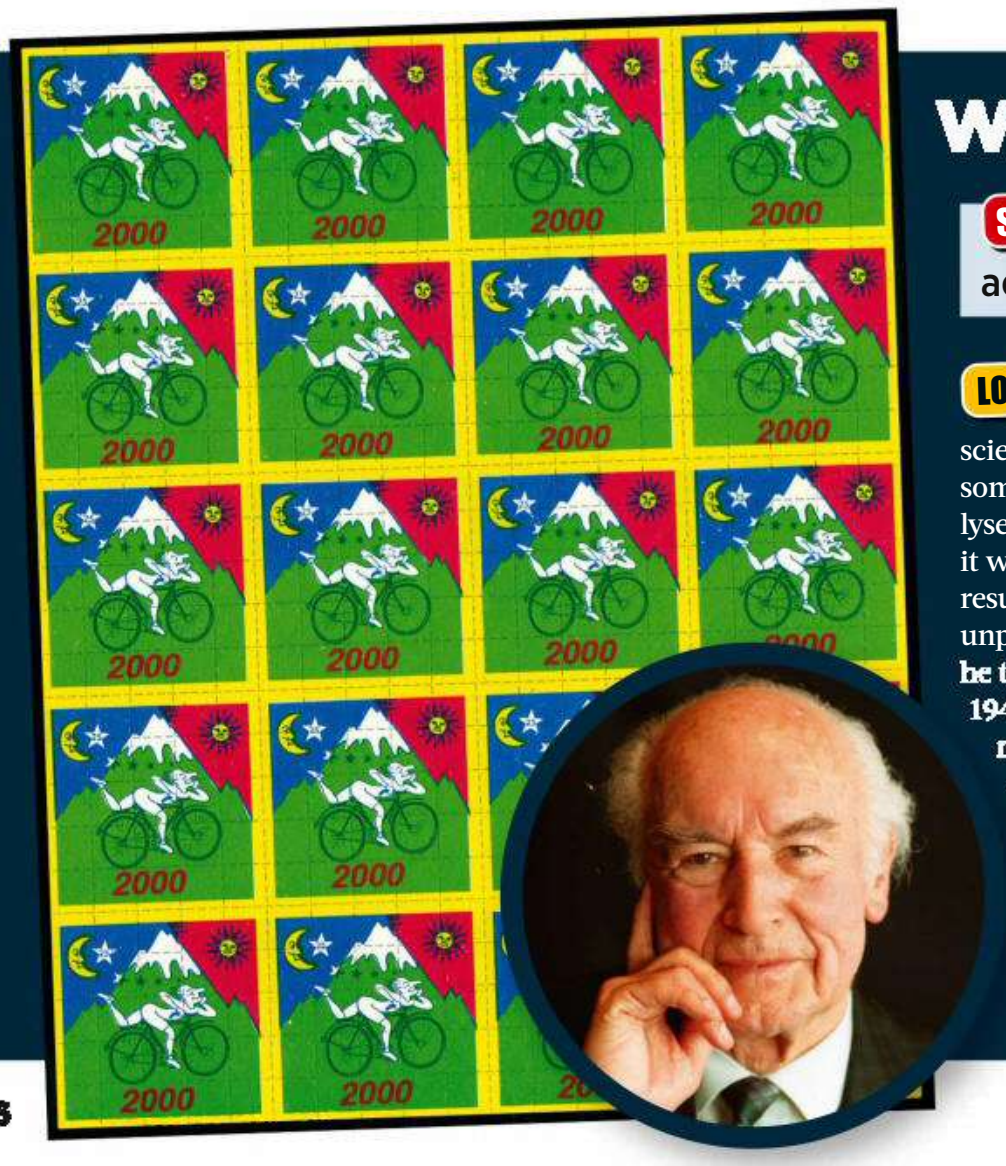
Who first took LSD?

SHORT ANSWER Who better to have the first acid trip than its creator?

LONG ANSWER The first time that Swiss scientist Albert Hofmann took some of his synthesised drug, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), it was an accident. Luckily, the resulting feeling was “not unpleasant”, so three days later he took some more. On 19 April 1943, Hofmann ingested 0.25 milligrams, believing that LSD could be useful in psychiatric treatments, and within an hour, he was asking his assistant to take him home as his perception began to waver.

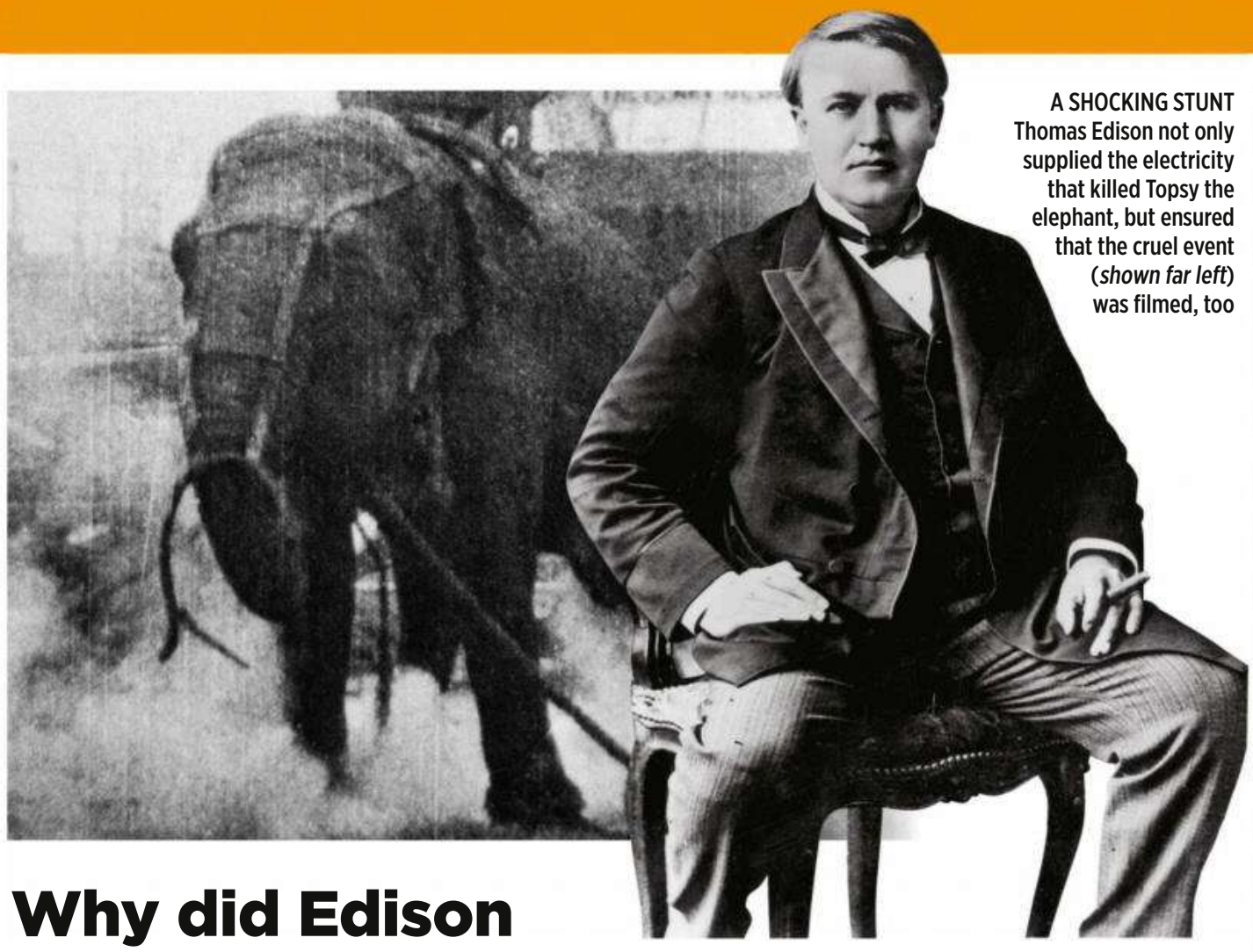
Wartime restrictions meant the duo did not have access to a car, so Hofmann and his assistant made the journey on bicycles. The first acid trip (in more ways than one) had its low points: paranoia, and Hofmann’s belief that his neighbour was a “malevolent witch”. But he did enjoy the “kaleidoscopic, fantastic images... exploding in coloured fountains”.

This landmark moment for LSD – an origin story for the psychedelic counterculture of the 1960s – is still marked every year as ‘Bicycle Day’.



PSYCHEDELIC PIONEER
A sheet of LSD blotter paper commemorates Albert Hofmann (*inset*) and his first cycling ‘trip’

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE X1, ISRAEL MUSEUM X1, LYNN HATZIUS X1



A SHOCKING STUNT Thomas Edison not only supplied the electricity that killed Topsy the elephant, but ensured that the cruel event (*shown far left*) was filmed, too

Why did Edison electrocute an elephant?

SHORT ANSWER The pachyderm's punishment was not part of Edison's anti-AC campaign, but he still filmed it

LONG ANSWER Thomas Edison was desperate for his direct current (DC) system to be adopted to distribute electrical power in the US, but he faced a challenge from Serbian engineer Nikola Tesla, who wanted the alternating current (AC) system to be used instead. In the ensuing 'war of the currents', each side fought for the future of electricity and there were casualties.

In a bid to show that AC was dangerous, Edison launched a smear campaign in which he electrocuted a veritable menagerie of animals, from stray dogs to a horse, and backed the first ever use of the electric chair to execute a human – as long as it used AC.

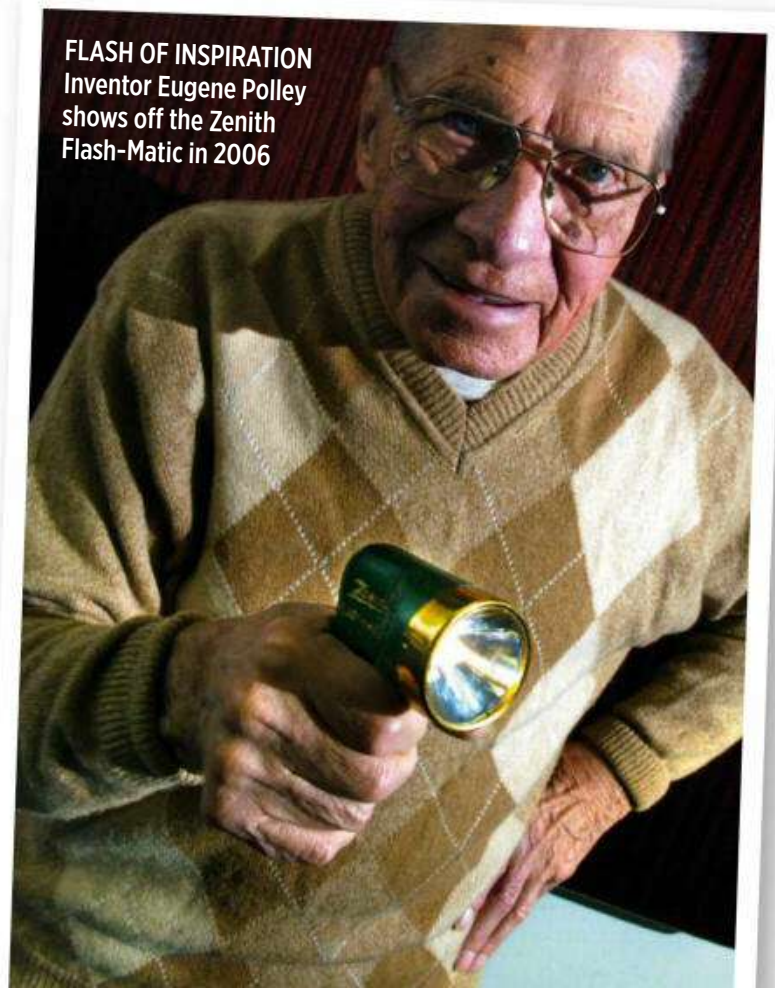
Then, in January 1903, Edison's company supplied the 6,600 volts that electrocuted an Asian elephant named Topsy. But this was not part of the war; Edison had lost that a decade earlier. Instead, Topsy had been deemed out of control after killing a spectator, so needed to be put down. The truth was that she had endured a lifetime of abuse in circuses and amusement parks, and that the deceased spectator had deliberately taunted her.

It was decided that if Topsy was to die, it might as well be a crowd drawing spectacle at Coney Island, New York, with Edison's film company also in charge of filming the grotesque event.

What was the Zenith Flash-Matic?

SHORT ANSWER Watching TV today would be cooler with one of these

LONG ANSWER Although it could be mistaken for a prop from an old sci fi movie or a fancy looking torch, the Zenith Flash Matic was a game (and channel) changer for television. It was the first wireless remote, designed by Eugene Polley and put on sale by Zenith in 1955. Its trigger set off light sensors at the corners of the screen to turn the television off or on, but in practice, it was glitchy and regularly affected by other lights in the room. The device only lasted a year before a new model of remote control, the Zenith Space Command, went into production.



FLASH OF INSPIRATION Inventor Eugene Polley shows off the Zenith Flash-Matic in 2006

Who was 'Arib al-Ma'muniyya?

SHORT ANSWER A woman and a slave in medieval Iraq, yet still a powerful character at the Baghdad court

LONG ANSWER Information about 'Arib al-Ma'muniyya mostly comes from a 10th-century collection of poems and writings, but it's all good news. Despite being a *qiyan*, an enslaved female entertainer for the elite at the medieval Baghdad court, she wowed audiences for decades with her beauty, intelligence and talent.

Thought to have been born around AD 797, 'Arib entered service as a performer in her teens. Fully literate – itself an oddity for most people at the time, let alone a woman – she was a poet, calligrapher and singer-songwriter, and also a tough opponent in chess and backgammon. Caliphs paid her huge sums for her talents: one thought her worth 50,000 dirhams, while another offered her double that.

Men pined for her, wrote her poems, and ensured she would be remembered by recording her deeds. By the time of her death, supposedly well into her nineties, 'Arib had made herself fabulously wealthy and free.

THE ENTERTAINER 'Arib al-Ma'muniyya regularly serenaded Baghdad's royal court

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ONE TO WATCH

Austin Butler stars as Elvis Presley in Baz Luhrmann's rock'n'roll extravaganza, with Tom Hanks (*pictured left, with Butler*) as the star's manager, Colonel Tom Parker. The film charts Presley's rise to fame – and the adoration of his fans (*below*)

The King and The Colonel

Elvis / In cinemas from Friday 24 June

It's hard to overstate the level of the adulation that irrevocably changed the life of Elvis Aaron Presley. Or, by pre internet era standards, the speed at which it happened. In 1954, Presley, then just a young hopeful, launched into a cover of blues singer Arthur Crudup's 'That's All Right' at Sun Records in Memphis. This was the new sound for which Sun's owner, Sam Phillips, had been searching.

By 1956, Presley's fame was such that four of his singles, beginning with 'Heartbreak Hotel', hit number one on the *Billboard* Top 100. More than this, Elvis was a cultural phenomenon, the man who brought the excitement of rock'n'roll to the wider world. As John Lennon once quipped, "Without Elvis, there would be no Beatles."

But what was it like being the man in the eye of the storm? It's a question that lies at the heart of a new biopic from Australian director Baz Luhrmann of *Moulin Rouge!* fame.

Looking uncannily like The King, Austin Butler stars as Presley. In the film's other key piece of casting, Tom Hanks plays against his everyman image as Colonel Tom Parker, a figure the press release for *Elvis* charitably describes as "enigmatic". Others have been less kind, notably over the percentage of Presley's earnings taken by Parker, which rose as high as 50 per cent.

As for the trajectory of the biopic, it largely focuses on the two decades when Parker oversaw Presley's career, from 1955 to The King's death in 1977. These were tumultuous years of social change, an era Elvis did as much as anyone to usher in but which arguably left him stranded during his jumpsuit Las Vegas years.

As for whether the biopic is going to be worth seeing, the opinion of Presley's daughter, Lisa Marie, is certainly promising. "I've seen Baz Luhrmann's movie *Elvis* twice now," she tweeted in May. "Let me tell you that it is nothing short of spectacular. Absolutely exquisite."

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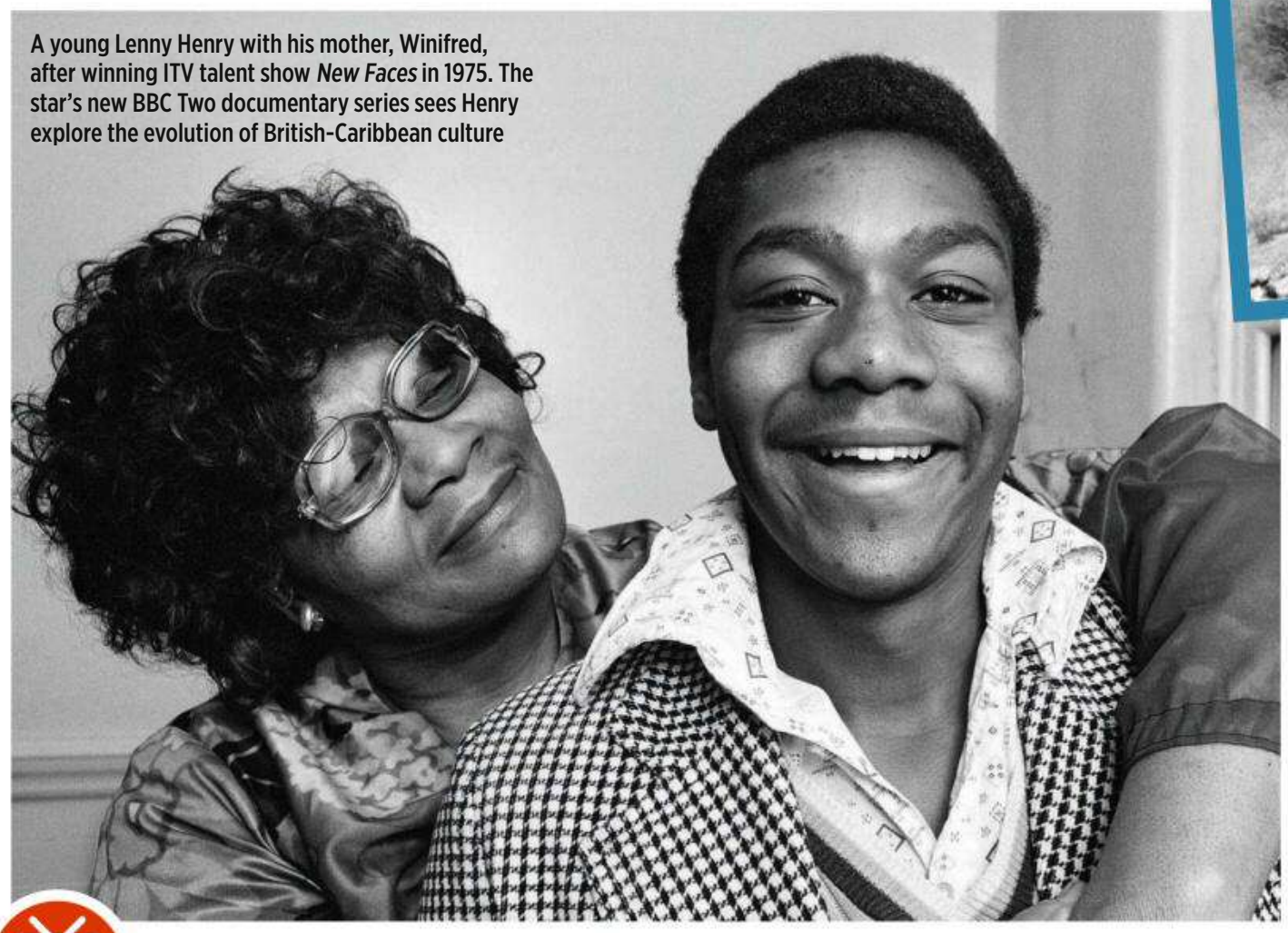


A young Lenny Henry with his mother, Winifred, after winning ITV talent show *New Faces* in 1975. The star's new BBC Two documentary series sees Henry explore the evolution of British-Caribbean culture

Cultural identity

Lenny Henry's Caribbean Britain / BBC Two, June

When Sir Lenny Henry was growing up in Dudley, his mother encouraged him to go out and integrate with those who lived around him. But this could be confusing. In a home where the influence of Jamaica was a constant presence, would 'fitting in' mean he would somehow lose sight of his Caribbean culture?

As this new two-parter reveals, questions around integration still concern the writer, actor and comedian. In particular, he wants to understand whether it is a process that works both ways, and whether integration represents a cultural loss or gain. Cue a two-part series that's also a celebration of British-Caribbean life, and which features contributions from the likes of Jazzie B, Floella Benjamin, Sonia Boyce, David Harewood and Benjamin Zephaniah.

The first episode focuses on the culture brought from the Caribbean by those who arrived in the immediate aftermath of World War II. This is in part the story of how calypso and ska came to Britain, but it also takes in theatre and art – and entrepreneurship and resilience.

The work of cultural pioneers paved a way for those who followed, as the second programme reveals. Reflecting on his own coming of age, Henry considers how he, along with other second-generation and third-generation British-born Caribbean kids put their identities into their art. Ranging across 1980s arts collectives, the evolution of brands and new musical forms, it's a story of how successive generations have taken Caribbean culture into the British mainstream.

As for generations born later still, Henry looks at how they are reconnecting with their own Caribbean heritage.

Episode one focuses on aspects of Caribbean culture brought to the UK after WWII, such as calypso music

Episode two looks at how second and third-generation British-Caribbean children have expressed their identity

Aerial attack

Bomber: Terror of WWII, Sky History, Monday 6 June

On 1 September 1939, German forces crossed the border into Poland. On the same day, four Luftwaffe bomber groups launched an attack on Warsaw. Within the space of a week, the city's anti-aircraft defences numbered just a few guns and much of the Polish capital lay in ruins.

It was confirmation, if any were needed in the wake of German and Italian aerial attacks during the Spanish Civil War and similar Japanese operations against China, that the bomber was now a key weapon – and a weapon of fear for civilian populations in particular.

Over six episodes, *Bomber: Terror of WWII* tells the story of how both bombers and the weapons they delivered developed over the course of World War II, a story that culminates with the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X3, IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM/PETE HOLDGATE X1

The price of power

Severus / BBC Radio 4, Monday 4 July

On 4 February AD 211, the Roman emperor Septimius Severus died in Eboracum, present-day York. It was just a few weeks since ill-health had forced him to withdraw from leading a military campaign to extend his empire north into Caledonia. Born in what is now Libya, he was Rome's first African emperor, and travelled to Britain in AD 208.

What should we make of what was, by any standards, a remarkable life? It's a question that underpins a new BBC Radio 4 drama by Paterson Joseph (who also plays Severus) and David Reed, which begins with the emperor's physician, Sammonicus (David Mitchell), telling his patient that a gouty foot is slowly poisoning him. Severus is told that amputation may be the only way to save his life, and he is driven into a fury.

In order to calm him down, Sammonicus asks Severus to tell him about his arrival in Britain, a land where he has been resident for three years. What follows is a tale in which the emperor tries to show himself in the best-possible light: a benign figure and happy family man who seeks to expand Rome's reach for purely egalitarian reasons. It is, of course, a self serving narrative, as becomes all too clear to Sammonicus as he gets caught up in the machinations of the imperial family.

Also starring in the drama is Adjoa Andoh as Julia, the wife of Severus, as well as John Macmillan and Ben Scheck, who play the couple's sons Antoninus and Geta.

Paterson Joseph (*far right*) stars as Severus in BBC Radio 4's drama of the same name, with Adjoa Andoh (*right*) as his wife, Julia. The emperor – depicted in bust form and with his family, above – was born in what is now Libya

Combat in the raw

Falklands: The Frontline Story (title TBC)

BBC Two, June

Royal Marines march towards Port Stanley during the Falklands War. Testimonies from British veterans feature in a programme marking 40 years since the conflict erupted

It's 40 years since a naval task force sailed for the South Atlantic on a mission to retake the Falkland Islands, which had been invaded and occupied by Argentina. By 14 June 1982, British forces had retaken the territory, a speedy victory that seemed from the outside to be remarkably straightforward.

The reality on the ground was very different. At moments, the Royal Marines and infantrymen who fought on the frontline had to fix bayonets and fight hand to hand to retake the islands. They often fought in the dark and on treacherous terrain. This was warfare at its most brutal.

The stories of 10 of these men, some of them sharing their memories for the first time, make up this 90 minute documentary that offers a soldier's view of events four decades ago. Some of those interviewed have largely come to terms with what happened, while others remain haunted by what they saw. All thought they were fighting a necessary war in the face of aggression, and all were profoundly changed by what they experienced.

The documentary also considers how the Falklands War has shaped our understanding of trauma, and acts as a reminder of how so many of those who fought were so young that they're only now reaching an age where they can draw their pensions.

Shadowy figure

The People vs J Edgar Hoover, BBC Radio 4, June

Between 1924 and 1972, J Edgar Hoover (*pictured*) served as director of the FBI and its predecessor, the Bureau of Investigation. Over years that encompassed the Great Depression, World War II and the agitation for civil rights, Hoover became a figure who, despite introducing innovations in police technology and law enforcement, is associated with abuses of his power.

Over 10 episodes, Emily Maitlis traces the story of how Hoover, a man who harassed political dissidents and secretly blackmailed politicians, came to exert such a huge influence on American life.

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

WHAT TO SEE AND WHERE TO VISIT IN THE WIDER WORLD OF HISTORY

An 18th-century depiction of an anatomy lesson, painted by Dutch artist Cornelis Troost, is one of many artworks set to appear in the National Museum of Scotland's upcoming exhibition

ANATOMICAL MUSEUM COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, AMSTERDAM MUSEUM, ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST/ HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II, ITV PICTUREDESK, PETER BLENKHARN, JENNIE BOND, FAVERSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

EXHIBITION

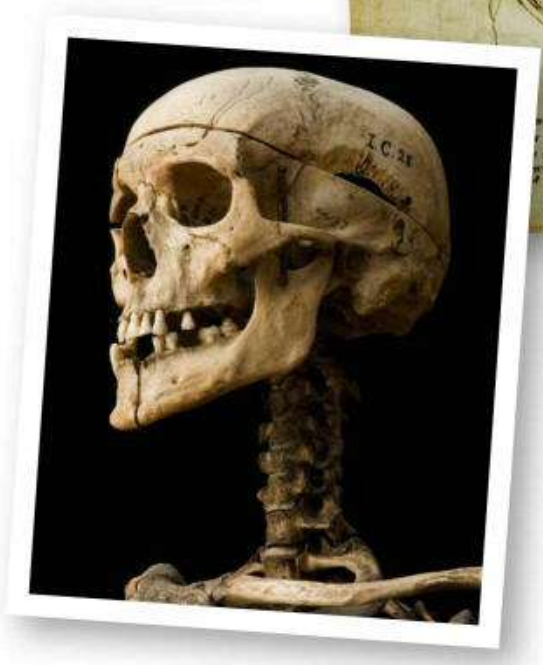
Anatomy: A Matter of Death and Life

PAID ENTRY National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2 July – 30 October, *nms.ac.uk*

The gruesome, yet scientifically important, practice of dissecting human bodies is the subject of a new exhibition opening at the National Museum of Scotland this July.

Spanning more than 500 years of history, the display will examine the work of anatomists down the ages, as well as the ethical considerations of dealing with human remains. Alongside anatomical sketches by Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci, there will be a local focus, too, with the story of Edinburgh murderers William Burke and William Hare also explored in the display. Not only can visitors discover the story behind the duo's killings motivated by a desire to sell fresh 'specimens' to the anatomist Robert Knox but there will also be the chance to see the skeleton of Burke himself, who was dissected after his execution in 1829.

Other highlights include an iron mortsafe designed to prevent grave robberies, plus a series of mysterious miniature coffins discovered on Arthur's Seat nearly 200 years ago.



ABOVE: **A sketch by Leonardo da Vinci, showing the veins and muscles of the human arm**

LEFT: **The skull of Edinburgh serial killer William Burke, who was publicly dissected after his execution in 1829**

A costume from the ITV adaptation of Jane Austen's unfinished novel *Sanditon* will be included in the exhibition

EXHIBITION

A Costume of Sport

PAID ENTRY Chawton House, near Alton, Hampshire, until 4 September, *chawtonhouse.org*

The Grade II* listed Chawton House is best known for its connection to Jane Austen, whose brother Edward inherited the property in 1794. Living only a short distance away, the novelist was a frequent visitor to the house, and made reference to the property in her letters. But as well as its link to a literary great, Chawton was also home to a rich sporting tradition, with numerous games played within its grounds.

This new exhibition explores the types of sporting attire worn during Austen's lifetime and beyond, ranging from full length flannel swimming dresses to top hats worn by cricketers. There is also the chance to see a costume from ITV's recent adaptation of *Sanditon* – the novelist's final, unfinished work.

FESTIVAL

Bradford Literature Festival

PAID ENTRY Various locations around Bradford, 24 June – 3 July, *bradfordlitfest.co.uk*

After being hosted partly online in 2021, the Bradford Literature Festival will be returning this summer with an in person programme of talks, concerts and theatre performances.

As ever, there will be plenty of events for history lovers to enjoy, including a discussion on 25 July between author Robert Hardman and former BBC royal correspondent Jennie Bond (*top right*) about Hardman's new book, *Queen of our Times*, which explores the 70 year reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

On the same date, historian Saeed Khan will discuss the 1947 partition of India and its continuing impact today, while on 1 July, bestselling author Alison Weir (*bottom right*) will be shedding light on her new novel about Elizabeth of York. For a full list of speakers, visit the website address above.

ONLINE LECTURE SERIES

HistoryExtra Masterclass: Everyday Life in Victorian Britain

10, 17 and 24 June, *historyextra.com/masterclass*

HistoryExtra's popular Masterclass series will be continuing this June with a trio of online lectures, each exploring aspects of everyday life in Victorian Britain.

Hosted by Emma Griffin (*pictured right*), professor of modern British history at the University of East Anglia, the first session (10 June) will explore the radical changes triggered by the Industrial Revolution, and how new types of work brought fresh dangers as well as benefits to men.

In the second session (17 June), Griffin will reveal how factory employment transformed the lives of women, before concluding with a third and final session (24 June) looking at how family life was impacted by the new social freedoms of the period. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions in each lecture, and discuss a primary source chosen by Emma Griffin.

Access to the Masterclass is priced £15 per session, or £39 for the full series. To sign up, visit *historyextra.com/masterclass*.

PERMANENT EXHIBITION

The Faversham Charters and Magna Carta

FREE ENTRY The Town Hall, Faversham, Kent, open now, *favershamcharters.org*

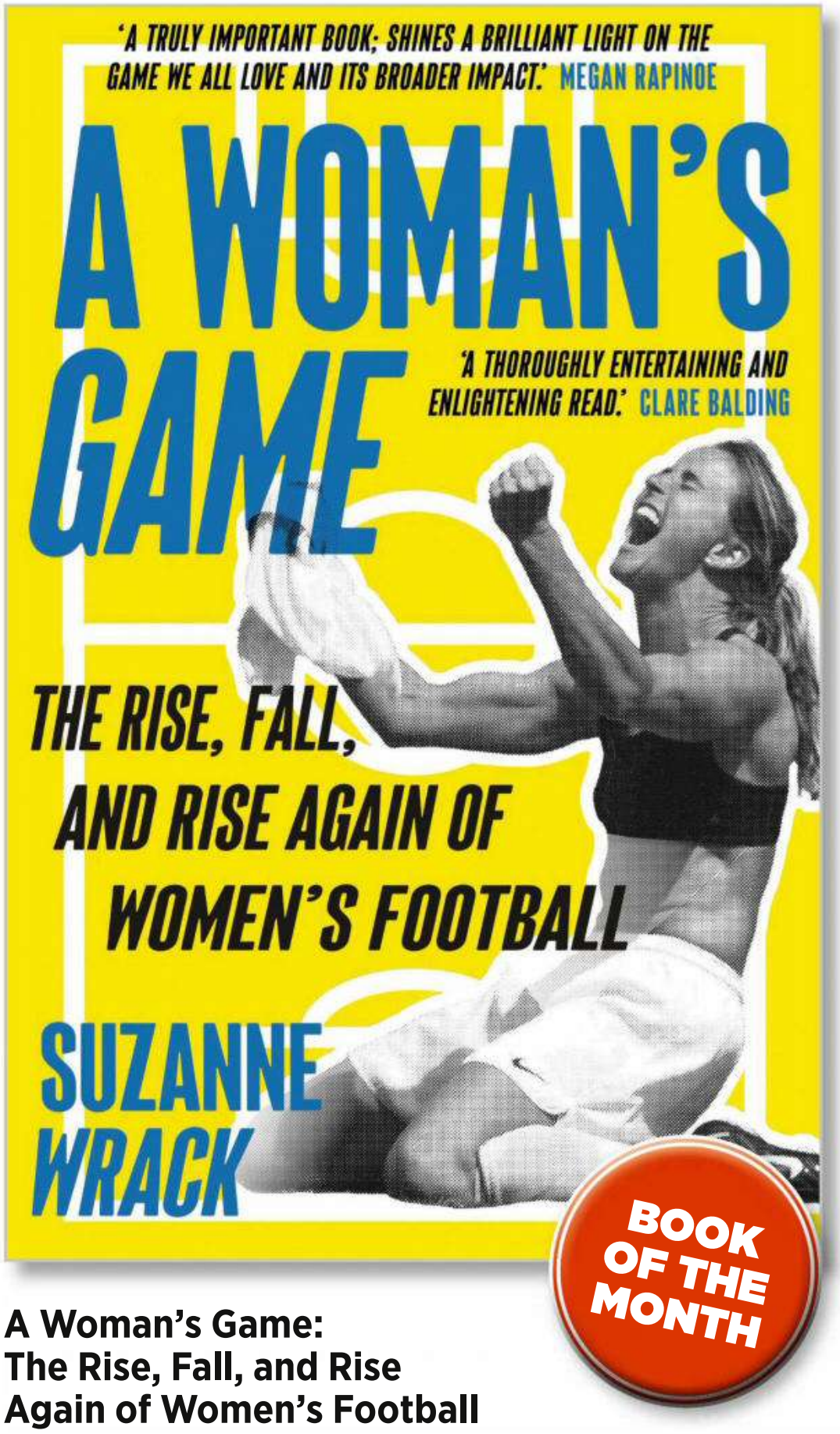
In 1300, Edward I presented the Kent town of Faversham with its own copy of Magna Carta. Specifically addressed to the "barons of the port of Faversham", the precious document one of only a handful of examples of its kind confirmed the rights set out in King John's original Magna Carta of 1215.

Seven years on from a successful temporary exhibition, a permanent display of Faversham's Magna Carta is now available to visit at the local town hall, where it is shown alongside several other important medieval documents and artefacts, including an illuminated charter issued by Henry IV (*pictured right*), and a 'moot horn' used to summon local government meetings.

A charter issued by Henry IV in 1408, confirming the rights of Faversham's town government

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS


'A TRULY IMPORTANT BOOK; SHINES A BRILLIANT LIGHT ON THE GAME WE ALL LOVE AND ITS BROADER IMPACT.' MEGAN RAPINOE
A WOMAN'S GAME
'A THOROUGHLY ENTERTAINING AND ENLIGHTENING READ.' CLARE BALDING
THE RISE, FALL, AND RISE AGAIN OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
SUZANNE WRACK
BOOK OF THE MONTH

A Woman's Game: The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of Women's Football

By Suzanne Wrack
Guardian Faber Publishing, £14.99, paperback, 256 pages

As the UEFA Women's Championship kicks off this summer, this book offers a lively, accessible history of women's football. Suzanne Wrack traces its origins in the Victorian era, its huge popularity throughout the 1910s, and the politically and financially motivated 1921 ban that saw the game pushed to the sidelines for half a century. She also charts its triumphant return and the ways in which women's football has had a huge impact far outside the realms of sport.

Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain

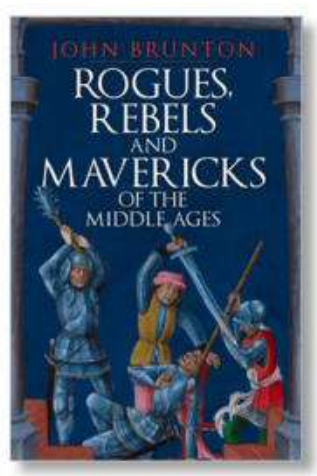
By Hannah Rose Woods
WH Allen, £20, hardback, 400 pages

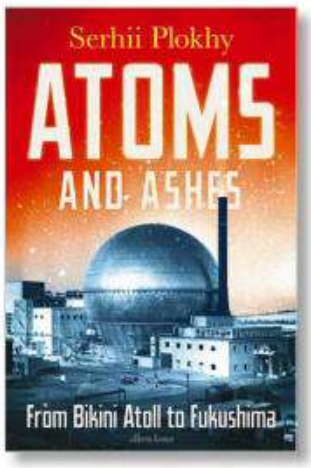
This look at how the past has been regarded and repackaged by generations of people in Britain offers a very literal backwards history opening with the culture wars and political divisions of the 21st century, before investigating the nostalgia of periods including World War II and the Victorian era. It's a fascinating exploration of why we turn to the past for comfort in times of crisis, and how history is used by those in power to shape present day arguments.

Rogues, Rebels and Mavericks of the Middle Ages

By John Brunton
Amberley, £20, hardback, 320 pages

There are few better ways of revealing a society's constraints than profiling some of the unlucky, unlikely or plain unlikable people who found themselves chafing against those limits. This set of concise biographies filters the medieval world through the experiences of 22 such characters, including mercenary and pirate Eustace the Monk, philosopher and theologian William of Ockham, and Plantagenet peeress Margaret Pole. Together, they depict a deeply proscribed world in which non compliance could have serious consequences including, but not limited to, death.





Atoms and Ashes: From Bikini Atoll to Fukushima

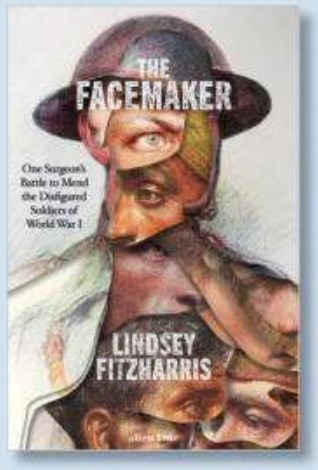
By Serhii Plokhy
Allen Lane, £25, hardback, 368 pages

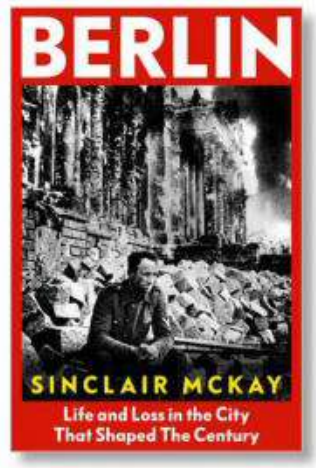
Harvard University historian Serhii Plokhy has, in recent years, turned his attention to meticulously exploring some of the 20th century's most dramatic moments. Now he applies his forensic detail and skilful use of eyewitness accounts to six nuclear catastrophes, including the fire at Windscale in 1957, the 1979 accident at Three Mile Island in the US, and the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. By setting them side by side, parallels emerge as do lessons for our future use of atomic power.

The Facemaker: One Surgeon's Battle to Mend the Disfigured Soldiers of World War I

By Lindsey Fitzharris
Allen Lane, £20, hardback, 336 pages

Many of the men who survived the horrors of World War I did so at great cost to their minds, their bodies, and because of the nature of trench warfare and the ever present threat of shrapnel their faces. This book tells some of their stories, and that of surgeon Howard Gillies, whose pioneering experiments in plastic surgery saw him transform the faces of thousands of soldiers throughout the conflict. It was a remarkable achievement, movingly told in this new account.





Berlin: Life and Loss in the City that Shaped the Century

By Sinclair McKay
Viking, £20, hardback, 464 pages

If you want to understand the divisions and dichotomies of the 20th century, you have to understand Berlin its people, its streets, its stories. That's the central argument of this book, which follows the city's inhabitants as they experience the trauma of World War I, the freedoms of the Weimar Republic, and the destruction and division of World War II and its aftermath. This is epic stuff, but the focus resolutely remains on the people buffeted by vast forces beyond their control.

PODCAST WHAT TO LISTEN TO... Each month we bring you three of our favourite podcasts from the BBC and HistoryExtra

Lady Killers with Lucy Worsley

bbc.in/3NhGMlH

This BBC Radio 4 series from author and broadcaster Lucy Worsley re examines murders carried out by women in the Victorian era from a 21st century, feminist perspective. As always, Worsley is an insightful guide, and she's joined by a range of experts who consider how such cases might unfold if they came to trial today.

The Who Do You Think You Are? podcast

bbc.in/3wrwsAt

If you're a fan of the BBC's long running genealogy TV show currently on its 19th series you can now reacquaint yourself with some classic episodes thanks to this podcast spinoff. Each focuses on a household name as they delve into their family tree, uncovering secrets and metaphorical skeletons along the way. Expect tears.

HistoryExtra: The Black Death

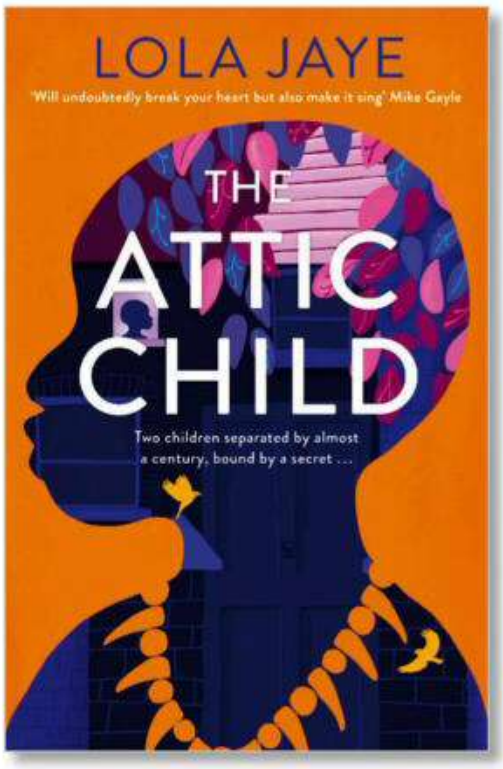
historyextra.podlink.to/TheBlackDeath

In the 1340s, people around the world started dying from a mysterious disease. Across the coming decade, it would go on to kill millions. But what factors sparked its spread? That is one the questions at the heart of this new six part podcast investigation, presented by Ellie Cawthorne.

▶▶ For more about the Black Death, turn to page 70

ALAMY X2, BBC PICTURES X1

HISTORICAL FICTION


LOLA JAYE
'Will undoubtedly break your heart but also make it sing' Mike Gayle
THE
ATTIC
CHILD
Two children separated by almost a century, bound by a secret ...

The Attic Child

By Lola Jaye
Macmillan, £14.99, hardback, 480 pages

In 1907, 12 year old Celestine finds himself spending most of his time locked in the attic of a large house by the sea. Treated as an unpaid servant, he is beginning to forget the family that he was taken from in Africa and struggles to remember his real name, Dikembe.

Many decades later, orphan Lowra is banished to that very same attic. Buried under the floorboards she finds a porcelain doll, an unusual beaded claw necklace and a sentence written on the wall in a language she can't understand. She soon realises she may not have been the first child to call this attic-prison home.

Excerpt

Dikembe, a young boy from the Congo, struggles to adapt to life in Britain after being taken from his family to serve as a 'companion' for an explorer named Sir Richard Babbington

A name was called and my first response was to ignore it. After all, it wasn't the name given to me by my parents, but one I'd first heard on the steamer and quickly put down to delirium. Now I had recovered and could ignore it no longer.

'Celestine, are you awake?' He peered from the side of the door with a large smile.

'Yes, Mr Richard.' I pulled the cover to my chin as he moved closer to the bed.

'Splendid. Then we are making progress.'

I nodded my head slowly as he sat on the edge of the bed.

'Mr Richard…' I began.

He placed his cold palm onto my forehead. 'Your temperature does feel normal,' he muttered.

'My name, sir. It is Dikembe.' I felt my own heartbeat stop, hoping I had not offended him.

'Dear boy, of all the things you are on the verge of experiencing now you have arrived on these shores, of all the resources I have put in place, the English you are now starting to grasp more easily, is it not only fair I have one wish granted of my own?'

A wave of confusion confronted me. Was it during my delirium that I had asked for any of these things? Perhaps so.

'My request is that you be called Celestine.'

I ran through the names of each of my brothers and how my own name fitted in at the very end of that line of children. Dikembe. *A good and special child.* Confusion mixed with sadness threatened me from within. My father calling me by my given name and Mama telling me to 'do everything Mr Richard asks of you, my son.'

'Yes, Mr Richard,' I said, failing to add that this would be a temporary measure, considering I'd soon be back home. Indeed, for now, I would simply be obeying my mother and not this white man.

This was what I told myself.

ZEESHAN MALLICK

Q&A
Lola Jaye

Lola Jaye is a British author, speaker and psychotherapist. Born and raised in London, she has also lived in Nigeria and the US. Lola is a member of the Black Writers' Guild and has written five previous works of fiction, but *The Attic Child* is her first epic historical novel.

Where did the inspiration for the novel come from?
The Attic Child is partly based on the real-life story of Ndugu M'hali, a little boy born in 1865 who was taken from Africa by the British explorer Henry Morton Stanley. His death [in a canoeing accident] at the age of 12 can only be described as a tragedy, so I wanted to offer some type of hope to his story. Through my own character of Dikembe, I wanted to reimagine what Ndugu's life could have been. What could he have achieved if he'd been allowed to live?

The story takes place across two timelines, several decades apart. Did this make it difficult to write?
I found it easier to write one timeline in one go and then tackle the other separately to avoid any confusion in my writing process. The 1990s was an era that I can recall, so it wasn't hard to put myself in the space of Lowra, who, alongside Dikembe, is the book's other protagonist.

Writing about Dikembe should have proven tricky – his part of the novel takes place during the Edwardian period, and there's just no way I could have experienced that era without a time machine! However, as a black woman, I could still recognise and empathise with his feelings of living in a society that doesn't always accept him 'as is'.

Did you develop a connection with your characters?
I developed an emotional connection with Ndugu M'hali before I started work on this book. In 2016, I went to see an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery entitled Black Chronicles: Photographic Portraits 1862–1948, which had pictures of Ndugu. From the moment my eyes clocked his, I knew that I would one day write his story.

How important was it to you to honour the real history behind the story?
Very important. Over the past two years, the world has perhaps woken up to the work of so-called 'explorers' from history, but what occurred in the Congo a few years after Ndugu died is something that a lot of people still don't know about. The fact that millions of innocent people were killed [by Belgian colonists] remains a hidden history to many.

When I first saw Ndugu's photographs, I was angered that there wasn't much more on him other than his depiction as a 'slave', and not a boy who had a mum, dad and possibly siblings – a life. I wanted him to have a voice. A depiction of innocence, of which he was denied.

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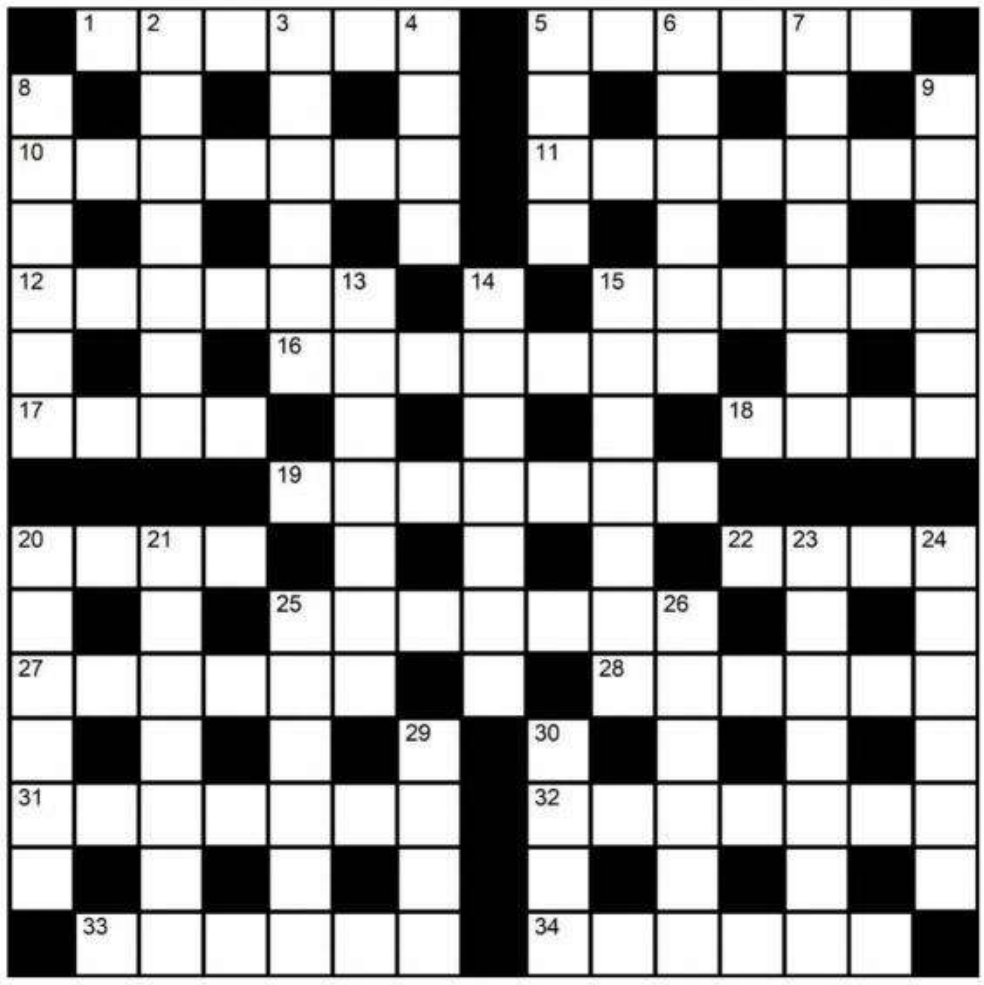

Set by Richard Smyth

ACROSS

1 Son of Uther Pendragon (6)
5 Portuguese city, known for the religious visions of three local children in 1917 (6)
10 Tragic king of Thebes, in Greek myth (7)
11 Lise ___ (1878–1968), Vienna-born nuclear physicist (7)
12 Greek mathematician known as 'the father of geometry' (6)
15 Texas city on the US-Mexico border, founded in 1755 (6)
16 George ___ (1854–1932), US photography pioneer (7)
17/18 Nickname for the city of Los Angeles (2-2,4)
19 Greek goddess of agriculture and the harvest (7)
20 George Bernard ___ (1856–1950), Irish playwright (4)
22 Goddess of ancient Egypt (4)
25 Monstrous son of Sycorax in *The Tempest* (7)
27 Ancient Semitic language (6)
28 Pablo ___ (1904–73), Chilean poet and politician (6)
31 One of the four great ancient capitals of China (7)
32 Football club founded by Woolwich munitions workers in 1886 (7)
33 Ethnic Hungarian (6)
34 Michael ___ (b1942), Palme d'Or-winning Austrian filmmaker (6)

DOWN

2 Liberal reformist of the late 18th century (7)
3 Member of the 1960s counterculture (6)
4 *Mary* ___, warship sunk in 1545 (4)
5 1980 film musical (4)
6 Island of east Asia formerly known as Formosa (6)
7 Nelson ___ (1918–2013), South African anti-apartheid revolutionary and statesman (7)
8 Enoch ___ (1912–98), classicist and Conservative MP (6)
9 Famed golfer Palmer, novelist Bennett or composer Schoenberg, perhaps (6)
13 British region ruled by the Danes in the 9th and 10th centuries (7)
14 Christian martyr, supposedly a third-century Bishop of Paris (2,5)
15 ___ Treaty, agreement of 1929 between Italy and the Holy See (7)
20 Mythical creature with a human head and the body of a lion (6)
21 Country ruled by Enver Hoxha from 1941 to 1985 (7)
23 Satellite launched by the Soviet Union in 1957 (7)
24 Ronald ___ (1920–2011), British cartoonist and illustrator (6)
25 ___ of York (1469–1507), daughter of Edward IV (6)
26 Horatio ___ (1758–1805), English naval hero (6)
29 Stock character in 20th-century Gothic horror (4)
30 1970 Korean War satire directed by Robert Altman (4)

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LETTERS

NATURAL CAUSES?

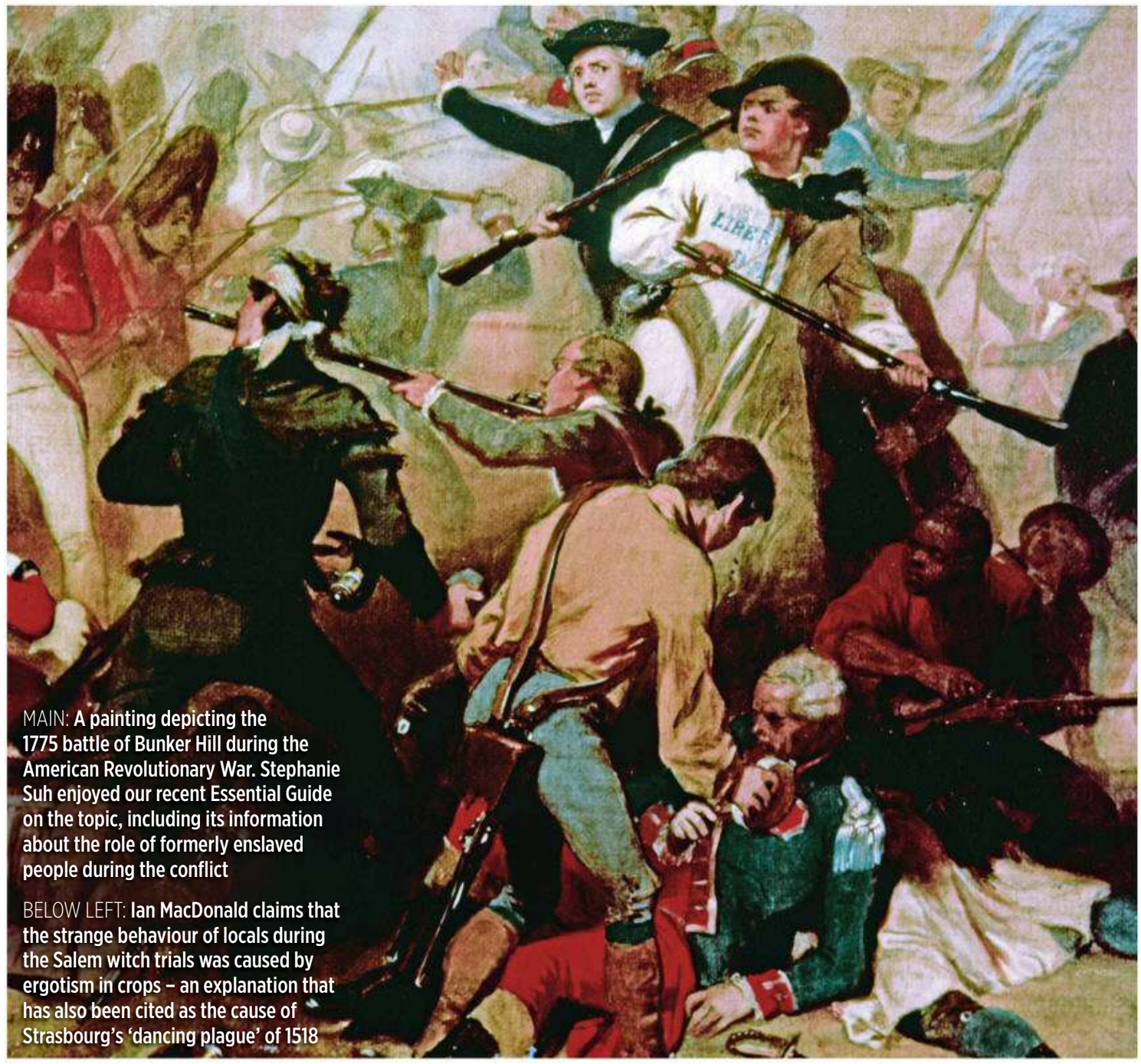
I enjoyed your excellent Essential Guide to the History of Witchcraft (April 2022), but I was surprised to learn that historians have 'debunked' the idea that ergotism played a part in the tragic events in Salem, Massachusetts.

Outbreaks of ergotism infecting cereal crops have been known for centuries and they have had a devastating impact on human health and behaviour. An early recorded outbreak took place in what is now Germany in AD 857, and ergotism was probably the cause of the so called 'dancing plague' in Strasbourg in 1518, when hundreds of women suddenly began dancing in a frenzied fashion and continued doing so for days.

There have been many more recent cases, too. An outbreak of ergotism in Manchester in 1928 was attributed to infected rye bread, and so were events in Pont Saint Esprit, France, in 1951, when more than 200 people fell seriously ill.

Ergotism is known to lead to convulsions, hallucinations and manic behaviour of the kind witnessed at Salem, and can be caused by a number of basic factors: how and when grass is cut; tillage being too shallow; a failure to rotate soil when planting crops; the way rye and wheat are stored during the winter season; and the amount of recent rainfall. During the 1600s, it wasn't always recognised that farming failures were to blame – it was much easier to attribute a ruined harvest to divine judgment or accuse your neighbours of witchcraft.

Ian MacDonald, Essex



MAIN: **A painting depicting the 1775 battle of Bunker Hill during the American Revolutionary War. Stephanie Suh enjoyed our recent Essential Guide on the topic, including its information about the role of formerly enslaved people during the conflict**

BELOW LEFT: **Ian MacDonald claims that the strange behaviour of locals during the Salem witch trials was caused by ergotism in crops – an explanation that has also been cited as the cause of Strasbourg's 'dancing plague' of 1518**

ALAMY X3

OVERLOOKING THE POSITIVES

I enjoyed your recent Essential Guide about the history of witches. However, the stories which claimed that witches were primarily seen as negative and evil neglected the fact that some people who possessed 'supernatural' gifts were seen as positive, helping others in various ways. While the 'evil' grabs the news, the positive aspects often seem to be overlooked.

George McDaniel, by email

HIDDEN HISTORIES

Your Essential Guide to the American Revolutionary War (May 2022) was a superb compendium of the subject, full of interesting knowledge about the birth of a nation made possible not only by the Founding Fathers, but also by people whom they didn't regard as their equals, and therefore had no qualms about excluding from the family of freedom. For example, the intelligence of Salem Poor, a black militiaman whose bravery and patriotism inspired him to fight for the country that once enslaved him, deserves wider recognition and respect.

It does seem surprising to know, however, that freed black people in the antebellum [pre American Civil War] period could be given educational opportunities, more so than other formerly enslaved people much later on. I speculate that this was perhaps because some of the early Americans that had emigrated from Great Britain had different ideals to their descendants, influenced by a European rationalism that equated progress with humanism.

To conclude, I want to share a titbit about the fourth president of the US, James Madison. He was a diminutive man in stature, but his love of sweets was so immense that his wife, Dolley (or Dolly) Madison, allegedly invented an ice cream with a unique recipe just for him. Many years later, in the 20th century, stories about the first lady serving ice cream at the White House would inspire the name of the popular Dolly Madison ice cream brand, featuring her elegant silhouette on the packaging.

Stephanie Suh, Los Angeles

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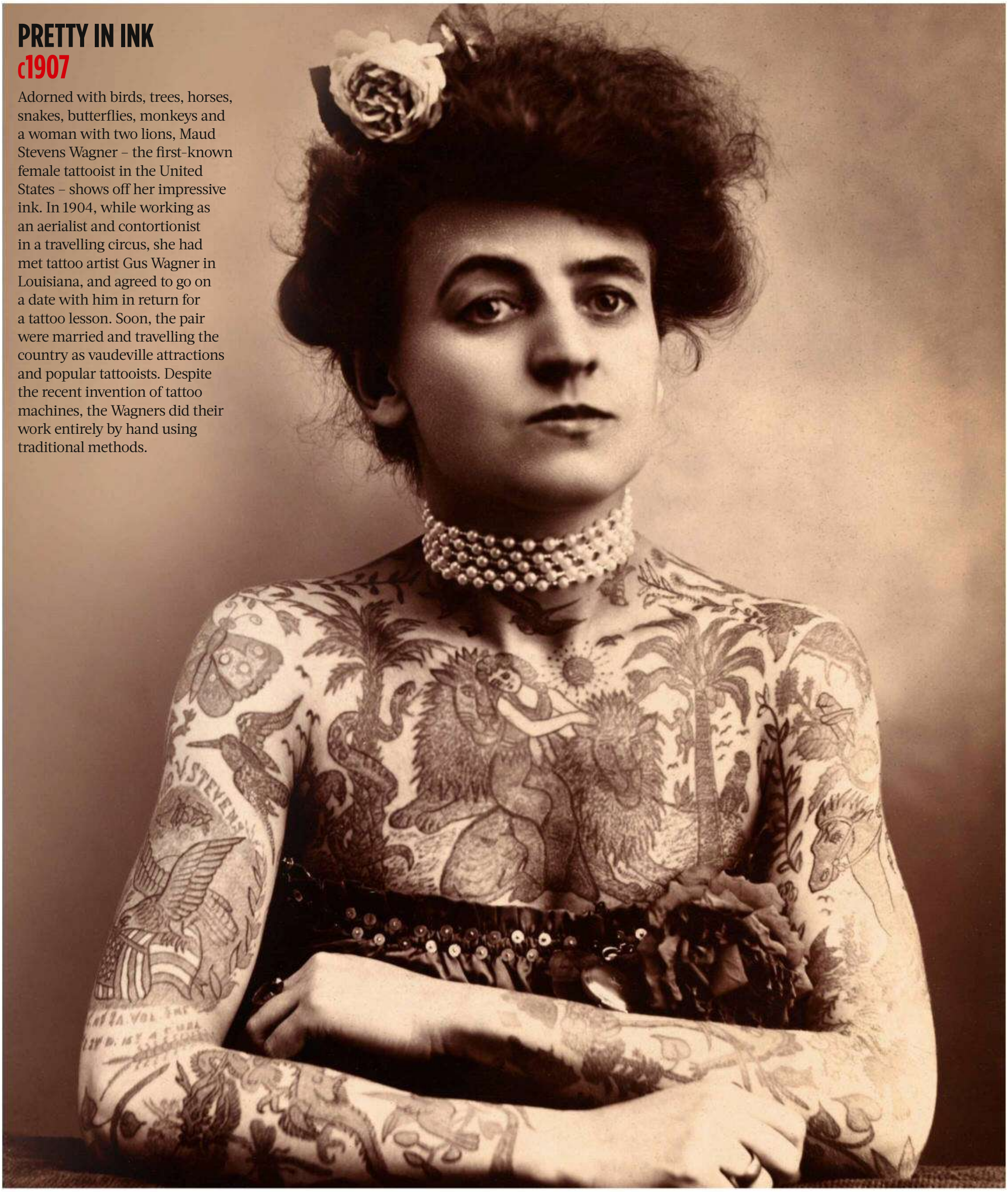

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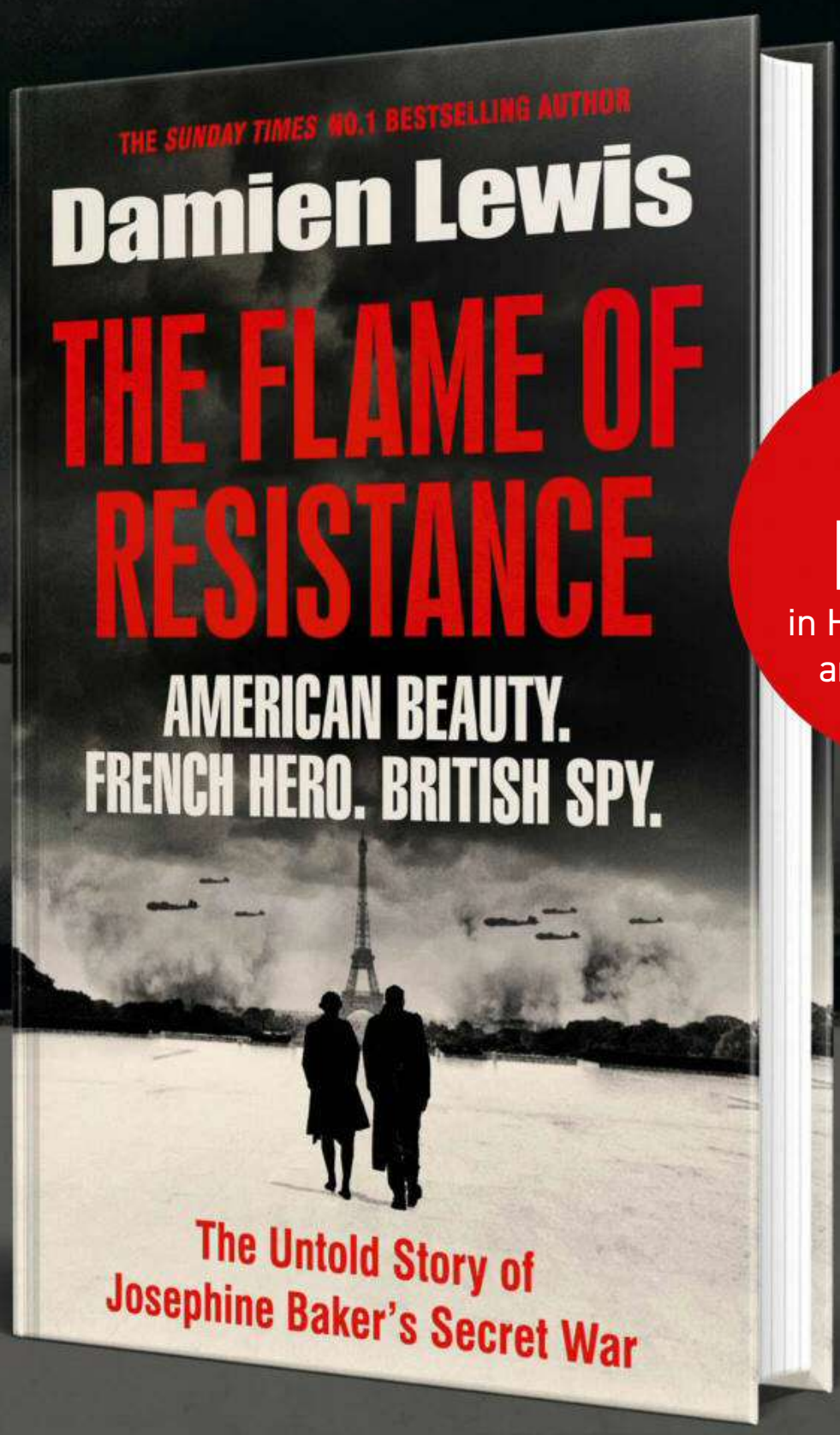

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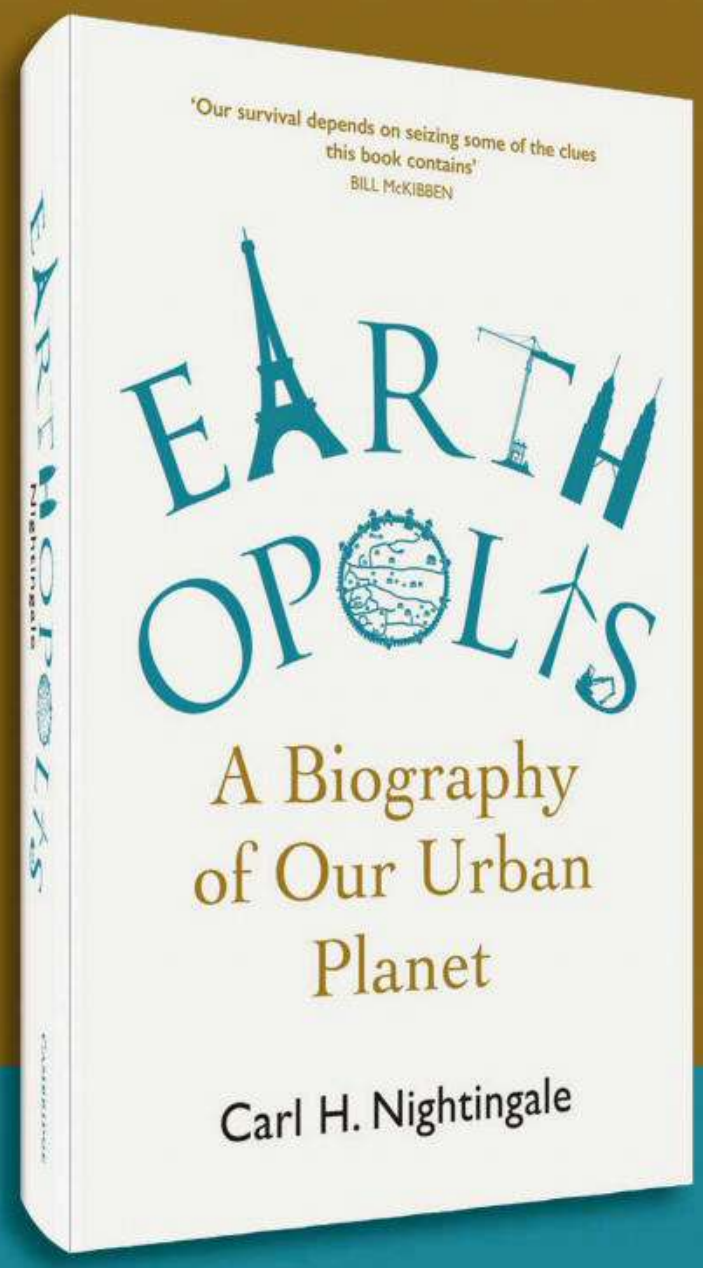
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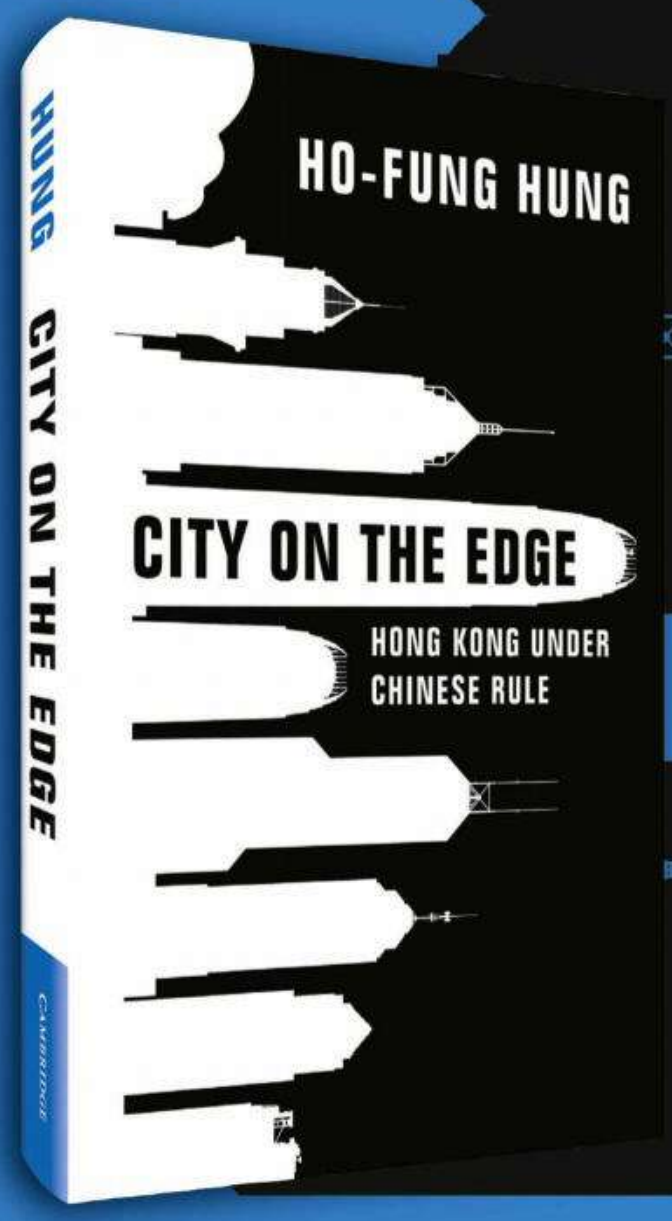

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